



Terrorism: the systematic use of terror
esp. as a means of coercion.

-Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary

I have never met anybody who wasn't
against war. Even Hitler and Mussolini
were, according to themselves.

-David Low



MEDIAREADER

ISSUE FIVE: THE PHOTO DOCUMENTARY
FEATURING THE WORK OF MICHAEL RHOADES

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PREFACE

I woke up on September 11th to my friend Noah Leger frantically shaking me. We were in Kent, Ohio. The band we play in had a show in Cleveland that night, about half an hour from where we were staying. As he pushed me back and forth, I tried to pull my sleeping bag over my head.

He exclaimed: "Dave, Roby—you guys should get up. World War III just began. The twin towers just fell, and the Pentagon is totally destroyed."

I groaned in disbelief: "Noah—come on man. Let me get some sleep."

Fifteen seconds went by and Noah was still there; I looked up to see him towering over me as I lay on the floor.

"I'm serious man, this is totally fucked."

Roby stirred for the first time, subconsciously absorbing the sparse conversation. "What?"

Noah explained what he had seen on the TV.

Roby burst into tears. "We're totally fucked! I knew this was going to happen..." A rock seemed to hit her throat and she abruptly stopped the sentence.

I retorted with my usual: "let's just go and see what's happening... It's probably nothing to freak out about. Come on..."

We went downstairs to gather around the television, to find that what Noah spoke was the truth; that, indeed, for the first time in American history, the US had been attacked on continental American soil, and, beyond this, that things had suddenly become,

for the first time in over thirty years, very concretely, and I emphasize, *very* concretely, fucked. That for the first time since the Vietnam "conflict," politics would, from this moment forth, become an unavoidable aspect in every American's daily life. That even though we, as Americans, attempt to avoid domestic political dispute at almost any cost, we would almost all know someone who had died in these towers, or at least know someone who knows someone who died in these towers—and that kind of proximity—that kind of juxtaposition between personal intimacy and mass destruction—brings political dispute, absolutely and inescapably, to this country. And that's big.

As we watched, live on the air, the towers fell. My stomach churned. Roby cried. Noah was dazed. Bin Laden's photo was already flashing on the television. Al was still sleeping.

We went to find Al in the depths of the Kentian punk house. We found him: "Al—you should get up. World War III just began. The twin towers just fell, and the Pentagon is totally destroyed. I'm serious man, this is big." He rose, a bit confused from the commotion, and, wiping the sleep from his eyes, walked in to see the replay.

Our band was on tour, making our way to New York City to catch a flight to Europe where we would tour for another five weeks. Eleven hours passed and we were still in front of the TV. George Bush was preparing to address the nation while we got ready to leave for Cleveland, in hopes that NPR would air the broadcast. What could you do, really? Either you watch those sickening images replay for

another few hours, or you try to push yourself out of the house, to create a momentary outlet for yourself and the few other people who would still attend the show. Briefly diffuse your mind before returning to watch more TV. This is what we thought anyhow—and what a strange show that was: *Speak in Tongues* to thirty of the craziest-feeling people we've ever played in front of.

Four days later we caught the very first international flight to actually fly out of the US, out of JFK. On the way to the airport, the roadway was dead. As we passed Manhattan, the smoldering buildings were still letting off their smoke signals that something was—and would continue to be—seriously fucked.

We arrived in Germany to surprisingly low security. Four out of the five of us were waved through customs, the other was searched and busted smuggling in a sizeable bundle of CDs. We were forced to pay \$1000 USD up front. Military police armed with machine guns were wandering the quadrants of the airport but didn't make contact. An hour later, we found our ride and began discussing the recent events.

"It's good, I think" said our driver, a towering Czech. "Of course I don't think that people should be murdered in such a way, but the US thinks that it is so untouchable, and things like this happen all the time all around the world, and the US doesn't do a thing about it. If you're asking me whether I have sympathy for America, my answer is no."

The point was taken. It was, nonetheless, a rough way to meet someone.

Five weeks across Europe began, and during that time we passed Prague's Radio Free Europe building surrounded by tanks, countless truckers sporting American flags, England's sympathy, France's articulated notion that American foreign policy is the root of thousands of lost lives, the Czech Republic's brutal honesty, Germany's outward concern, Italy's proof that life is worth loving, and Switzerland's apathy.

After a show in Croatia, we found ourselves in an unusual hotel. The concert promoter was checking us in when I asked what the place was.

"A refugee camp of sorts. And a hotel."

"A refugee camp for what?" I responded.

"The war."

Unabashed about being completely illiterate in regards to world politics, I pushed on: "Which war? There hasn't been a war here in quite some time, has there?"

"No, not in a while" he responded. "Many of these people have been here for ten or fifteen years. Their houses were destroyed and they are trying to rebuild them. Many of them have yet to be let into their towns again, so they are here, waiting until they are allowed to rebuild their homes."

"Ohhh..." I groaned, suddenly and extremely embarrassed by my Ameri-centric knowledge of world politics. What he spoke of was a holy war, the Muslims against the Christians. Town after town was destroyed. In one such town, Christians killed so



many Muslims that other Muslims came back and erected an enormous cross to symbolically remind the Christians of their actions.

And now Croatia stands as a post-war community, and though the city of Zagreb would lead you to believe that it is a thriving country, there are thousands of people spread out into refugee hotels and refugee camps such as this hotel, still waiting for their wrecked villages to be rebuilt.

We continued our trip across Europe, continuously reminded of the World Trade Centers by the covers of newspapers written in languages that I couldn't understand. Some ran garish illustrations of Bin Laden aflame: "Anti-Christ." Some hid behind ambiguous text. A memorable English paper boldly stated: "BLAIRE: STOP THE WAR!" As we pushed on, we learned of US bands who cancelled their tours, who changed their names, and who put stickers on their records in an effort to somehow excuse the "punk" sensibility of their endorsement of shock-culture that they indulged while selecting their (now) highly offensive and potentially career-ruining name. Information came to us second hand: a conversation, an email, a loose translation, a short phone call, a picture from a magazine. Flag sales were international news.

Five weeks and twelve countries later, we returned to New York and began the final week of tour which would lead us back to Chicago. On the way into DC, we passed the Pentagon. The cranes couldn't hide the irrevocable fact that an entire wing was completely destroyed, reduced to molten steel and shards of concrete. Croatia popped into my head again.

The next day I found myself in conversation with someone who is, like many people, in full support of the US bombing of Afghanistan. He challenged me: "What is your solution then? These people have to pay! You can't just sit back and let something like this go without action!"

"I know, but I don't believe this is the *right* course of action... Completely devastating a country in pursuit of an elite team of terrorists isn't exactly justifiable to me. Even if they were harboring terrorists, the *government* was harboring terrorists—not the *citizens* of that country."

"Sure, I'll agree, but what's the solution? We're calculating things to plan the least amount of American losses in the operation. We can't send in people to hand combat the Taliban without losing lives. So the people of that country miscalculated—and now they will have to pay for it."

"OK. Counterpoint: What are your ideas about that guy who bombed a few abortion clinics years ago? Western North Carolina has been harboring him for years. Would you agree that, following your logic, the government should go in and begin bombing those towns and mountains until this guy is turned over to authorities?"

"That's totally different."

"Because of scale or geographical location?"

"It's just not the same thing at all."

"But don't you concede the simple fact that, by continuously air raiding Afghanistan, our country is playing the exact same role as those involved with the



September 11th attack? We are acting as international terrorists, and one action (September 11th) should never make another action (War on Afghanistan) exempt from being classified as exactly what it is: terrorism. And furthermore—and for the sake of logical argument—if you are taking a stance against terrorism, you can not be a terrorist and an anti-terrorist at the same time! So which are you?"

The conversation went in circles.

Weeks later, I began thinking about the next issue of MediaReader, already months overdue. There were interviews lined up with bands, political writings and social commentary. A German acquaintance was arrested at the G-8 conference and held without phone, attorney, or proper food for two weeks. He had offered to write about his (unjust) experiences in Italian prison. Then there's economics! The Euro will take over as the European Union's currency this winter and spring, and there has been heated debate (to say the least) over it since the inception of this unifying (globalizing) money. There was, of course, September 11th, a topic that must be tackled. And then there is the war in Israel and Palestine; India and Pakistan are at each other's throats; and Anthrax is still circulating through the American postal network.

There are major topics everywhere. I thought about compiling this issue exclusively out of interviews with people who live in NYC, who were there when the towers fell. I considered only running the letters from prisoners that I have received over the last six years of publishing various magazines. A dream of mine has always been to collect and publish children's illustrations of struggle and destruction, conceding

that their understanding of events and concern for what could follow any such event is often much more honest and direct than our own. My plans for the next MediaReader seemed scattered and lacking unity. And then something happened: I saw a small batch of Mike Rhoades' photos at the Fireside Bowl in Chicago. I was immediately struck by how uniquely and powerfully they captured the essence of human emotion, and I suddenly knew what the next issue of MediaReader must contain. But it couldn't be a normal issue of the magazine—all of the music articles had to go, and the essays must be pushed back.

This issue is dedicated to all those who stand united in protest of right-wing politics, the IMF, the WTO, globalization, the School of the Americas, the buck above the environment, scientific intervention in agriculture, US foreign policy, and last, but most definitely not least, killing people because people have been killed. America is currently devastating Afghanistan, bombing the desert, bombing caves, miscalculating, recalculating, and bombing more desert, always missing the target, but always trying again.

What follows is one hundred pages of struggle and protest in East Timor, Mexico, and the United States. I am honored to feature the work of Michael Rhoades. His photography speaks more loudly and articulately than any piece of writing I can conceive of—fully capturing the injustice of our current political and economic system while embracing the truism that we, as a like-minded group of individuals, must unite if we are to create change. I hope each of you will find the inspiration to do just that.

—Dave Laney, Editor



EAST TIMOR

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 1999

"Every ridge, every stone, every brook and tree had witnessed tremendous suffering," writes East Timorese independence leader Xanana Gusmao in a collection of his writings titled *To Resist Is To Win*. Gusmao, recounting the beginnings of Falintil, the East Timorese guerilla army, was referring to the first years of the Indonesian occupation of his homeland, but he could have been referring to any moment of that violent 24-year occupation which culminated in the brutal gang-rape of East Timor in September of 1999, during the final weeks of Indonesian rule. ►

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

EAST TIMOR ACTION NETWORK: ETAN.ORG, NEWS & BACKGROUND ARTICLES / FUND FOR EAST TIMOR / TIMOR AID: EASTTIMOR.COM
TO PURCHASE XANANA GUSMAO'S BOOK *To Resist Is To Win* OR OTHER BOOKS ON EAST TIMOR: ETAN.ORG/RESOURCE/BOOKSETC.HTM



In these photographs, made in East Timor after the violence following the U.N.-sponsored referendum on independence from Indonesia, the charred remains of a family's kitchen, identification photos and personal files rotting among the litter on the rocky ground, the bare, skeletal frames of hospital beds, their mattresses looted by the Indonesian military and pro-Indonesian East Timorese militias, speak as loudly to me as the shell-shocked stares of refugees clutching crucifixes and children in the back of a UNHCR truck. I found too many loud silences in East Timor, too many witnesses to a nation's terror. I learned quickly that the pained, wailing emptiness of a flattened neighborhood could be deafening.

Since the Indonesian invasion in 1975, 200,000 East Timorese were murdered by the Indonesian military in a horrific war against self-determination; yet, incredibly, on 30 August 1999 the East Timorese, in the face of direct threats by the Indonesian military (TNI) and pro-Indonesian militias, voted overwhelmingly for independence. True to their word, the TNI and the East Timorese militias that it had armed and coordinated sank the nation into weeks of Indonesian-controlled chaos. At least 90% of the small nation's population were forced to flee from their homes, 70% of the nation's structures were destroyed, and approximately half of the population was pushed into Indonesian West Timor, where as many as 100,000 East Timorese are still forcibly held in refugee camps run by the same militias that had so successfully terrorized East Timor both before and after the referendum.

I first traveled to East Timor in August of 1999 as a U.N.-accredited election observer. I felt that I had to try, in some small way, to help during the referendum. Having never done anything of this type

before, I felt that going over as a member of an observer group was a good way to be "plugged-in" when I arrived. Unfortunately, photographically, my obligations as an observer had to take priority over my personal desire to document the situation, and, although I feel that participating in the referendum as I did is certainly one of the more important actions that I have taken in my lifetime, my photographs from the referendum period suffered because of that obligation. It was not until I returned independently to East Timor, in October of that year, after having been evacuated to Australia on 6 September and spending approximately six weeks in Sydney, frustrated and terrified for Timorese friends, writing letters and doing radio and television interviews to try to raise American awareness of the situation, that I was able to pursue photographs that I felt truly spoke of East Timor, and, sadly, of the latest variations on their continuing terror.

The rebuilding, now two years along, has in many ways only just begun. As a nation, East Timor is bound to run into new problems and, of course, will attain new victories. Importantly however, the majority of East Timorese people still have no workplace to return to, and boredom and a growing resentment of high-paid foreign workers—easily spotted zipping along East Timor's quickly eroding roads in hot-off-the-lot S.U.V.'s—loom nearly as ominously as problems as do hunger, poverty, and the constant threat of border incursions from Indonesian West Timor. And although grade schools had begun to operate before I'd left the country in December 1999, the majority of university students still have nowhere to continue their studies, and hence, are faced with little to do. Tellingly, there has been a steady increase in youth street gang activity in the two years following the referendum.



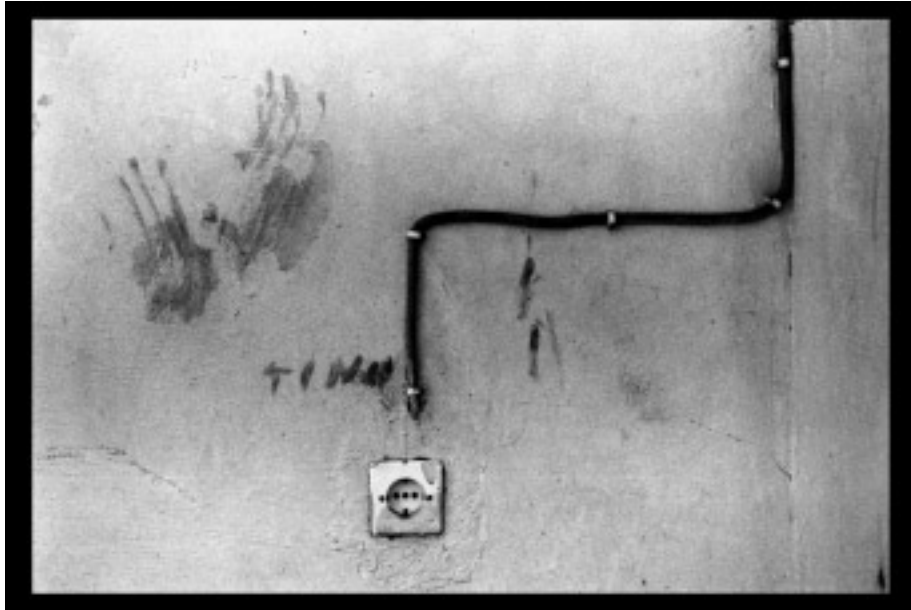
When the referendum was announced most East Timorese students (who were attending various Indonesian universities, predominantly in Jakarta or Bali) withdrew from their studies to return home for the campaign period leading up to the 30 August plebiscite, and remained, of course, for the voting itself. Now that the referendum has been successful these students are unwelcome in their respective universities and no longer have passports or other necessary documentation which might allow them to travel back into Indonesia or elsewhere. Most records that were on East Timorese soil have been burned, or are deteriorating on the floor of some roofless office, or have been washed against curbs by tropical rains. Suddenly citizens have no paper history: no record of studies, work, or commendation. No bank records and no savings. No back wages from bureaucratic jobs that, in the months leading up to the referendum, refused to pay employees suspected of pro-Independence sympathies. The East Timorese people returned from their white-knuckled hiding in the hills, or from forced-evacuations to West Timorese refugee camps, to shadows of homes, skeletons of neighborhoods. The East Timorese people returned to nothing, with next to nothing in their arms. Here, in the United States, we gave a collective shrug of the shoulders and sighed (again collectively), "Oh, those poor people... it's simply too much for one to bear." And then we closed our eyes. And now we forget.

Much of the nightmare in East Timor is over, despite the obstacles, but it has certainly not disappeared. There are still one hundred thousand East Timorese refugees in camps in West Timor, and that drama shows no sign of subsidence. The militia are given free reign inside of the camps, so the intimidation

and horror of those refugees continues. Aid groups are given little access at best to the camps because of continued militia activity and lack of any true cooperation from the Indonesians, so it is difficult to get a clear idea of what is happening inside. Gusmao recently traveled to West Timor and made an appeal to the militia leaders. He asked them to return home, to be a part of the infant East Timorese nation, hoping that with the militia leaders will come the tens of thousands of East Timorese that have been used by the pro-integration militias as hostages, bargaining chips, and sex slaves over the past two years.

In early April of 2002 the East Timorese will vote for their first president, and there is little doubt that this first president will be Xanana Gusmao. A month later, on 20 May, East Timor, now a U.N.-administered territory, will declare itself an independent nation. It is impossible to overstate the importance of continued grassroots support for East Timor as it makes these steps towards its independence and, hopefully, self-sustainability. It was the tireless activism of groups like the East Timor Action Network, both in the United States and abroad, that helped to bring East Timor's struggle to global attention, and for me that is perhaps the most convincing argument for participation and action at the most local levels. Boycotts and protests, phonecalls and e-mail and letters to senators, to presidents, and to corporate C.E.O.s do work. Our actions here do, in fact, have a significant effect on seemingly tiny nations thousands of miles away. Consider contacting the groups listed below to help as the East Timorese attempt their incredible transition.

-m. rhoades / 33ram.org



SUAI / 28 NOVEMBER 1999
INTERIOR OF A HOUSE ON THE COAST. BLOODY
HAND-PRINTS, AND AN ATTEMPT TO WRITE "TIMOR"
ON THE WALL WITH A BLOODY FINGER.



ERMERA / 27 OCTOBER 1999
REMNANTS OF "INTERROGATIONS." BLOODSTAINS ON
AN INTERIOR WALL OF THE ERMERA POLICE STATION.

IN THE MONTHS (AND YEARS) PRECEEDING AND THE
WEEKS FOLLOWING THE REFERENDUM OF 30 AUGUST
1999 PRO-INDEPENDENCE SUPPORTERS WERE
ROUTINELY THREATENED, TORTURED, AND MURDERED
BY THE INDONESIAN MILITARY AND POLICE, AND BY
THE EAST TIMORESE PRO-INTEGRATION MILITIAS
WHICH WERE OPENLY COORDINATED AND SUPPORTED
BY THE INDONESIAN ARMED FORCES.



ERMERA / 27 OCTOBER 1999
 THE RESULTS OF THE VIOLENCE INSTIGATED BY THE
 INDONESIAN MILITARY FOLLOWING THE REFERENDUM.
 70% OF THE STRUCTURES AND UTILITIES IN THE
 COUNTRY WERE DESTROYED, HUNDREDS OF
 EAST TIMORESE WERE MURDERED, AND
 HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS WERE FORCED FROM
 THEIR HOMES. RETURNEES WERE LEFT WITH LITTLE
 CHOICE BUT TO SCAVENGE THE REMAINS OF THE
 HOMES OF THEIR NOT-YET-RETURNED NEIGHBORS IN
 ORDER TO PROVIDE EVEN A MINIMAL AMOUNT OF
 SHELTER FOR THEIR FAMILIES AS THE
 WET SEASON APPROACHED.



MALIANA / 03 NOVEMBER 1999
 RETURNEES CLIMB THE EASTERN BANK OF THE MALIBACA RIVER,
 WHICH SEPERATES THE NEWLY INDEPENDENT EAST TIMOR
 FROM INDONESIA WEST TIMOR.

EACH MORNING HUNDREDS OF EAST TIMORESE LINE THE EASTERN BANK
 OF THIS RIVER, WAITING FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO CROSS FROM
 THE WEST DURING THE SINGLE HOUR ALLOTTED THEM BY
 THE INDONESIAN MILITARY.

DURING THE WEEKS OF POST-REFERENDUM VIOLENCE PRO-INTEGRATION
 MILITIAS, COOPERATING WITH THE INDONESIAN MILITARY, FORCED
 HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF EAST TIMORESE INTO CAMPS IN
 WEST TIMOR, WHERE THE MILITIAS NOW OPERATE
 WITH RELATIVE IMPUNITY.

AS OF EARLY MAY 2001 THERE WERE APPROXIMATELY 100,000 EAST
 TIMORESE STILL BEING HELD AGAINST THEIR WILL IN CAMPS IN WEST TIMOR.
 REPORTS STATE THAT THERE ARE AT MINIMUM FIVE DEATHS EACH DAY DUE TO
 DISEASE AND MALNUTRITION AS FOREIGN AID GROUPS ARE EITHER DENIED
 ACCESS OR, WHEN GIVEN ACCESS, ARE ALLOWED ONLY MINIMAL CONTACT WITH
 THE EAST TIMORESE IN THE CAMPS.



REMIXIO / 29 OCTOBER 1999

FALINTIL, THE PRO-INDEPENDENCE GUERRILLA ARMY THAT HAD BATTLED THE INDONESIANS SINCE 1975, SHOWED INCREDIBLE RESTRAINT AND DISCIPLINE BY REMAINING IN UN-SANCTIONED CANTONMENTS DURING THE CAMPAIGNING, POLLING, AND ENSUING VIOLENCE. BECAUSE FALINTIL DID NOT RETALIATE AGAINST THE INDONESIANS FOR THEIR BRUTALITY, THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT WAS UNABLE TO BLUR THE EVENTS OCCURRING IN EAST TIMOR FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY BY CLAIMING THAT THEIR OBSCENELY MURDEROUS ACTIONS WERE NECESSARY TO QUELL A "CIVIL WAR," WHICH, IN THE END, IT CLAIMED ANYWAY.

ON 29 OCTOBER ALEXANDER 'XANANA' GUSMAO, THEN THE LEADER OF FALINTIL, ARRIVED IN THE REMIXIO CANTONMENT FOR A PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF THE FUTURE OF EAST TIMOR AND ITS VARIED POLITICAL PARTIES.

PARTICIPANTS AND SPECTATORS WAITED HOURS IN THE HEAT FOR THE DISCUSSIONS AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE AND HEAR GUSMAO, THE COUNTRY'S UNITING FIGURE, WHO WAS JUST WEEKS BEFORE STILL HELD IN A PRISON IN JAKARTA, THE INDONESIAN CAPITAL.



MALIANA / 1 NOVEMBER 1999
BULLET CASINGS BLANKET THE FLOOR OF A ROOM IN THE POLICE STATION IN MALIANA.



MALIANA / 1 NOVEMBER 1999
HUMAN BONES AND SCRAPS OF CLOTHES ON THE
FLOOR OF THE POLICE STATION. IT IS KNOWN THAT AT
LEAST THREE PEOPLE WERE MURDERED HERE.
THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN IN THE SAME
ROOM AS THE PREVIOUS PHOTO.



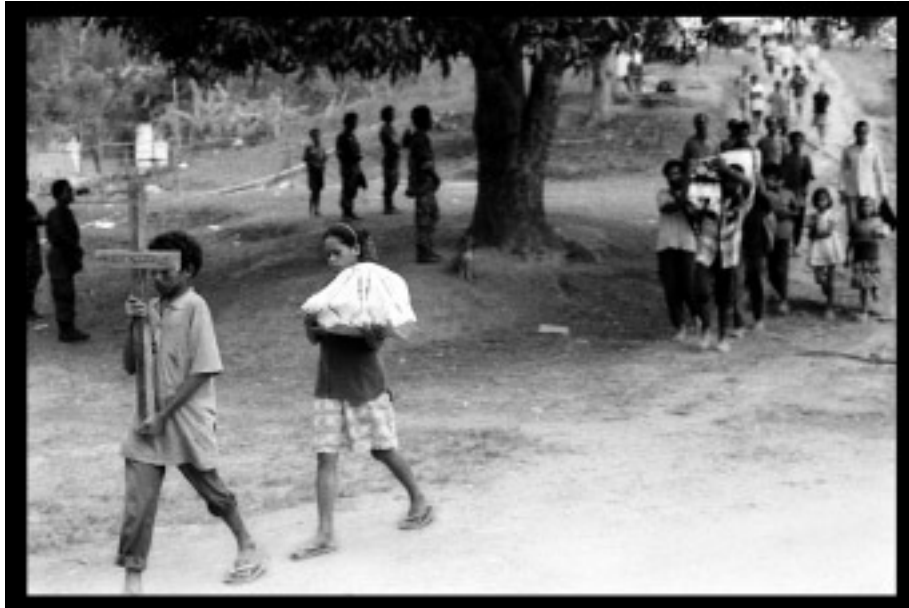
ERMERA / 27 OCTOBER 1999
A KITCHEN WITH ITS REFRIGERATOR
AND CHARRED CHAIRS.



DARE / 29 OCTOBER 1999
WE WERE INVITED BY A GOOD FRIEND
TO HIS COUSIN'S WEDDING—THE FIRST WEDDING
IN A NEWLY INDEPENDENT EAST TIMOR. TWENTY
COUPLES WERE MARRIED IN THIS CEREMONY. TWO
GIRLS TALK ON THE OUTSIDE STEP OF THE CHURCH.



DILI / 02 DECEMBER 1999
EAST TIMORESE FOREIGN-MINISTER-IN-EXILE, JOSE
RAMOS HORTA, SHARED THE 1996 NOBEL PEACE PRIZE
WITH EAST TIMORESE BISHOP CARLOS FELIPE
XIMENES BELO FOR THEIR STRUGGLES, BOTH WITHIN
AND OUTSIDE OF EAST TIMOR, TO GET THE WORLD TO
ACT IN SUPPORT OF THEIR COUNTRY'S PLIGHT. HORTA
WAS IN THE AIR, FLYING ON A DIPLOMATIC MISSION TO
PORTUGAL, WHEN 10,000 INDONESIAN TROOPS
INVADED EAST TIMOR ON 8 DECEMBER 1975. HE HAD
NOT BEEN BACK TO HIS COUNTRY SINCE. ---2
DECEMBER 1999, JOSE RAMOS HORTA WAS
WELCOMED HOME BY THIS RALLY IN DILI.



REMIXIO / 29 OCTOBER 1999
A FUNERAL PROCESSION THROUGH THE TOWN.
FALINTIL SOLDIERS STAND AT ATTENTION
IN THE BACKGROUND TO THE LEFT.



MALIANA / 02 NOVEMBER 1999
EAST TIMORESE DAY OF THE DEAD. THE
TIMORESE SPEND THE DAY REMEMBERING THE
DEAD. THEY GO TO THE CEMETARY, TEND FAMILY
GRAVES, LIGHT CANDLES, AND SPREAD FLOWER
PETALS ON AND AROUND THE TOMBS.



MALIANA / 01 NOVEMBER 1999
A BOY WAITING ON A WALL AT A UNHCR DISTRIBUTION
POINT. REFUGEES RETURNING HOME FROM WEST
TIMOR ARE GIVEN, PER FAMILY, A FEW KILOS OF
UNCOOKED RICE, A BLANKET, A TARP,
AND A COLLAPSIBLE WATER JUG.



ERMERA / 28 OCTOBER 1999
MORNING. CHILDREN FROM THE TOWN OF
ERMERA WATCH AS WE MAKE COFFEE AND
PACK UP OUR 'CAMPSITE.'



DILI / 26 OCTOBER 1999
THE SPORTS STADIUM IN EAST TIMOR'S CAPITAL, DILI, WAS TURNED INTO A TEMPORARY PROCESSING POINT FOR RETURNEES. PEOPLE WAIT NERVOUSLY OUTSIDE A LOCKED GATE HOPING TO HEAR THAT FAMILY AND FRIENDS HAD RETURNED SAFELY.



MALIANA / 03 NOVEMBER 1999
THE HOSPITAL IN MALIANA. AFTER THE WEEKS OF BLOODSHED IN EAST TIMOR FOLLOWING THE NEW NATION'S REFERENDUM ON INDEPENDENCE FROM INDONESIA, WORLD POWERS FINALLY MADE A MOVE TO STEP IN TO STOP THE VIOLENCE. SHORTLY AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF THE AUSTRALIAN-LED INTERNATIONAL FORCE TO EAST TIMOR, THE MAJORITY OF THE INDONESIAN MILITARY, AND THE INDONESIAN-MILITARY-BACKED EAST TIMORESE MILITIAS RETREATED TO INDONESIAN WEST TIMOR. WHILE RETREATING THEY TOOK TIME TO LOOT OR BURN ALL THAT THEY COULD.

HERE IN THE HOSPITAL IN MALIANA THERE WAS LITTLE LEFT: BEDFRAMES WITH NO MATTRESSES; MEDICINE CUPBOARDS WITH NO LOCKS AND, OF COURSE, NO MEDICINES. IN THE STREETS OF THE TOWN: HOMES WITH NO ROOFS OR WINDOWS (THE CORRUGATED METAL ROOFS WERE STOLEN, THE WINDOWS BROKEN), AND, WITH NOTHING TO PROTECT THEM FROM THE TROPICAL RAINS AND WINDS, BITS OF LIVES-WORKERS' I.D. CARDS, FAMILY PHOTOS-WERE SCATTERED ON THE GROUND DISSOLVING IN THE MOISTURE.



MALIANA / 01 NOVEMBER 1999
AT THE UNHCR DISTRIBUTION POINT.
A FAMILY THAT HAS JUST RETURNED FROM
WEEKS IN A CAMP IN WEST TIMOR.



MALIANA / 03 NOVEMBER 1999
THE EASTERN BANK OF THE MALIBACA RIVER. THE
ALOTTED HOUR FOR CROSSINGS NOW OVER, A GIRL
WANDERS BACK UP THE BANK ALONE. THE LARGE
GROUP IN THE BACKGROUND ARE COLLECTED AT A
NEWLY FORMED MARKETPLACE. WEST TIMORESE
ARE ALLOWED BY THE INDONESIAN SOLDIERS TO
CROSS WITH GOODS, SELLING OUT THEIR STOCKS
QUICKLY BECAUSE THERE IS NEXT TO NOTHING IN
THE NEARBY EAST TIMORESE TOWN OF MALIANA,
AND, ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE VERY LITTLE MONEY (IF
ANY), THE PEOPLE NEED FOOD, SOAP, AND CLOTHING
AMONG COUNTLESS OTHER NECESSITIES. IT IS
ASSUMED THAT THE SOLDIERS RECEIVED A
SUBSTANTIAL CUT OF THE PROFITS.



MALIANA / 03 NOVEMBER 1999
THE MARKET-PLACE AT THE BORDER.



ERMERA / 28 OCTOBER 1999
MEMBERS OF THE EAST TIMORESE HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION (CDHTL) RECORD TESTIMONY AND
DOCUMENT THE REMAINS AT A MURDER SIGHT.



MALIANA / 01 NOVEMBER 1999
SHIRT AND ROSARY BELONGING TO A MAN WHO WAS
MURDERED WHILE TRYING TO ESCAPE INDONESIAN
AUTHORITIES AND MILITIA BY CLIMBING OVER THIS
WALL BEHIND THE POLICE STATION IN MALIANA.
(REFER TO PAGES 17 AND 18)



MALIANA / 02 NOVEMBER 1999
THE GROUND OUTSIDE OF THE COMPOUND-LIKE HOME OF
THE AREA MILITIA LEADER. (MILITIA LEADERS WERE
COMMONLY THE LARGE LANDOWNERS AND THE
RELATIVELY AFFLUENT OF THEIR TOWNS; THOSE WHO
HAD PROFITED MOST FROM INDONESIAN RULE,
AND THUS WITH MUCH TO LOSE FROM AN INDONESIAN
PULLOUT.) AMONG THE LEAVES AND LITTER ARE
REMNANTS OF "FILES," COMPLETE WITH IDENTIFICATION
PHOTOS, THAT THE MILITIA KEPT ON AREA CITIZENS.



DILI / 15 NOVEMBER 1999
 RETURNEES WHO HAD BEEN FLOWN IN BY AN
 INTERFET (INTERNATIONAL FORCE EAST TIMOR) CARGO
 PLANE FROM THE WEST TIMORESE CAPITAL OF KUPANG
 CLIMB INTO UNHCR TRUCKS AT THE KOMORO AIRPORT
 IN DILI, AND ARE PROCESSED AND TEMPORARILY
 HOUSED IN A LARGE COMMUNITY CENTER NEARBY.



SUAI / 28 NOVEMBER 1999
 RETURNEES AT A PROCESSING POINT NEAR THE
 BORDER IN SOUTH-WESTERN EAST TIMOR.



DILI / 22 NOVEMBER 1999
IN THE RUINS OF A HOME IN THE KOMORO
NEIGHBORHOOD IN DILI, THE EAST TIMORESE CAPITAL.



DILI / 15 NOVEMBER 1999
RETURNEES WHO HAD BEEN FLOWN IN BY AN
INTERFET (INTERNATIONAL FORCE EAST TIMOR) CARGO
PLANE FROM THE WEST TIMORESE CAPITAL OF
KUPANG CLIMB DOWN FROM UNHCR TRUCKS AT THE
DON BOSCO COMMUNITY CENTER WHERE THEY WILL
BE PROCESSED AND HOUSED UNTIL THEY ARE ABLE TO
FIND TRANSPORTATION TO THEIR RESPECTIVE TOWNS.



MALIANA / 01 NOVEMBER 1999
EAST TIMORESE PREPARING TO DISTRIBUTE RICE
AT A WORLD VISION RICE DISTRIBUTION POINT.
WHENEVER POSSIBLE MANY NGOS EMPLOY LOCAL
EAST TIMORESE TO AID WITH THE DISTRIBUTIONS
AND OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES.



MALIANA / 01 NOVEMBER 1999
A YOUNG EAST TIMORESE MAN UNLOADING RICE
FROM A TRUCK AT A UNHCR DISTRIBUTION POINT.



MALIANA / 01 NOVEMBER 1999
LOCAL MEMBERS OF THE CNRT
(NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TIMORESE RESISTANCE—
THE COALITION OF INDEPENDENCE GROUPS
WHICH RAN THE CAMPAIGN FOR FULL
INDEPENDENCE IN THE REFERENDUM)
HELP WITH UNHCR'S DISTRIBUTION.



DILI / 20 NOVEMBER 1999
INSIDE THE CHARRED SHELL OF DILI'S MAIN POST
OFFICE. A MASSIVE CLEAN-UP EFFORT IS UNDERWAY
WITH INDEPENDENCE LEADER XANANA GUSMAO
JOINING IN, HEAVING DEBRIS BY THE SHOVELFUL.

A YOUNG MAN DROPS A DRAWER FROM A
SKELETAL STAIRWAY-LANDING TO FRIENDS
ON THE GROUND FLOOR.



DILI / 20 NOVEMBER 1999
CLEANING UP THE DEBRIS IN DILI'S MAIN POST OFFICE.



DILI / 20 NOVEMBER 1999
CLEANING UP THE DEBRIS IN THE STREETS
OUTSIDE OF DILI'S MAIN POST OFFICE.



MALIANA / 03 NOVEMBER 1999
AN ACCUSATORY GESTURE WHILE SITTING ON
THE EASTERN BANK OF THE MALIBACA RIVER,
WAITING FOR THE CROSSINGS TO BEGIN.



DARE / 29 OCTOBER 1999
A PRIEST HEARS A BRIDE'S CONFESSION
BEFORE THE WEDDING CEREMONY.



MALIANA / 01 NOVEMBER 1999
A BOY WATCHING FROM A WALL AT THE UNHCR
DISTRIBUTION POINT IN MALIANA.



DILI / 15 NOVEMBER 1999
CHILDREN ON A COASTAL ROAD EAST OF DILI.



MALIANA / 01 NOVEMBER 1999
A GIRL WAITS OUTSIDE THE FENCED COMPOUND THAT
HAS BECOME THE UNHCR DISTRIBUTION POINT.



DILI / 15 NOVEMBER 1999
A YOUNG BOY WATCHES AS A COFFEE TRUCK
PASSES. COFFEE TRUCKS LIKE THIS ARE OFTEN USED
FOR TRANSPORT AND ARE FILLED WELL BEYOND
"CAPACITY," WITH MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE
SQUEEZING ON FOR TRAVEL BETWEEN
AND WITHIN TOWNS.



DILI / 21 NOVEMBER 1999
ON 15 OCTOBER 1996 THEN-INDONESIAN PRESIDENT /
GENERAL SOEHARTO INAUGURATED THIS CHRIST
STATUE AS A "GIFT" FROM THE GREATER INDONESIAN
NATION TO EAST TIMOR. IT IS 27 METERS TALL,
SYMBOLIC OF EAST TIMOR'S INVOLUNTARY POSITION
AS THE 27TH INDONESIAN PROVINCE, MAKING IT THE
SECOND-LARGEST CHRIST STATUE IN THE WORLD. ITS
OUTSTRETCHED ARMS REACH TOWARDS JAKARTA,
THE INDONESIAN CAPITAL.

EAST TIMOR IS ROUGHLY 92% CATHOLIC, AND LIKE THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH IN CENTRAL AMERICA, THE EAST
TIMORESE CATHOLIC CHURCH PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE
IN EAST TIMOR'S INDEPENDENCE CAMPAIGN.

EAST TIMOR'S BISHOP BELO SHARED THE
1996 NOBEL PRIZE FOR PEACE WITH EAST TIMORESE
ACTIVIST-IN-EXILE JOSE RAMOS HORTA.

AN INTERFET (INTERNATIONAL FORCE EAST TIMOR)
HELICOPTER FLYS TO THE LEFT OF THE STATUE.



BALIBAR / 18 NOVEMBER
OUTSIDE OF THE REMAINS OF A SCHOOL HOUSE.
THIS WAS THE FIRST DAY BACK TO SCHOOL FOR THE
TOWN'S CHILDREN WHO ALL ATTENDED ENGLISH
CLASSES TAUGHT BY AN AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER
ON THIS FIRST MORNING.

MANY EAST TIMORESE CHILDREN HAD NOT BEEN
TO SCHOOL IN MONTHS SINCE MOST SCHOOL
TEACHERS (A GOVERNMENT JOB) WERE INDONESIAN
AND THEY HAD RETURNED TO INDONESIA FEARING
THE VIOLENCE SURROUNDING THE REFERENDUM.

A group of students was detained and transferred to the Miguel Hidalgo police station under suspicion of having stolen a city bus, but were released once they had shown that they had bought tickets from the driver. In spite of this all, they continued. First the students traveled by subway from the police station to the Auditorio Metro stop, and then, finally, marched to the location of a meeting of World Trade Organization ministers, where the students protested against the "criminal" economic policies of [Mexican] President Fox.

*-from La Jornada Sunday 2 December 2001
translation by michael rhoades*

I was photographing this group of university students in Mexico City while they protested in the morning of 1 September at the Chamber of Deputies. They had assembled in support of political prisoners of the Mexican state. Following the morning demonstration the students tried various marching routes in an attempt to connect with a larger protest at a meeting of trade ministers from 17 countries gathered under the banner of the World Trade Organization. After delaying traffic for about an hour with their assembly, blocked at every intersection by lines of police in full riot gear, the students flagged down a city bus and hopped aboard. En route, most pedestrians, seeing the masked students through the bus' windows and doors, decided to wait for the next bus to come along; but there were those, an older woman and her blind teenage daughter among them, who not only boarded but became a part of the protesting whole.

Twenty minutes later, in transit, following what is assumed to be the bus' normal route through city traffic, we were stopped at a police roadblock, which the students adeptly talked their way through. It was about five minutes after that stop, moving along again down Mexico City streets, while one student was playing her guitar, others singing along, when the bus was pulled over and boarded by screaming cops. The students desperately resisted, shouting back, "You have no right! You have no right!" The police were unable to get on board, but nevertheless escorted the bus to a police station a mile or so away. As they descended from the bus, in front of the television cameras that had been following along, the students held their bus tickets high in raised fists. In the face of such a public scene, the police had no choice but to send the protesters back on their way, but this time with no bus, so, as the above newspaper excerpt reports, they took the subway; and, of course, they marched.

m. rhoades / 33RaM.org



MEXICO CITY

UNAM STUDENTS PROTEST / DETENTION
01 SEPTEMBER 2001















The International Monetary Fund and World Bank had planned a meeting in Washington DC for the weekend of 29 and 30 September. The attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon forced a postponement of this meeting. However, with the call already out and as many as twenty thousand activists headed to Washington, the weekend of protests was not canceled, but quickly changed its focus to become a collective cry for peace.

m. rhoades / 33RaM.org



WASHINGTON, D.C.

ANTI-IMF / ANTI-WORLD BANK / ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATIONS

29-30 SEPTEMBER 2001

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER: INDYMEDIA.ORG, WASHINGTON D.C. INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER: DC.INDYMEDIA.ORG
ANTI-CAPITALIST CONVERGENCE: ABOLISHTHEBANK.ORG, ANSWER (ACT NOW TO STOP WAR AND END RACISM): INTERNATIONALANSWER.ORG



BECAUSE OF THE RESOLUTION LOSS INHERENT IN SMALLER FORMAT REPRODUCTIONS, IT IS DIFFICULT TO READ THE SIGN THAT THE MAN STANDING TOWARDS THE RIGHT SIDE OF THIS PHOTO IS HOLDING: "FLAGS KILL."



EVEN AMONG THE PROTESTERS THERE WAS MUCH
CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING FLAG BURNING.
SOME FOUND IT FAR TOO PROVOCATIVE AS A
SYMBOL OF THEIR COLLECTIVE DISCONTENT; YET
OTHERS SEEMED TO FEEL THAT IT WAS AN
INDISPENSIBLE ACT, GIVEN THE CONTEXT.



THE PERFORMANCE-PROTEST GROUP
BREAD AND PUPPETS.



THE PERFORMANCE-PROTEST GROUP
BREAD AND PUPPETS.



A COUNTER-PROTESTER (OBSCURED IN THE SHADOWS)
ATTACKED AND KNOCKED TO THE GROUND AN ANTI-WAR
DEMONSTRATOR WHO WAS ONE AMONG A GROUP BURNING
A U.S. FLAG. DEMONSTRATORS, WARY OF ANOTHER STORM
OF POLICE BATONS AND PEPPER-SPRAY, WERE CAREFUL TO
AVOID THE IMPRESSION THAT THERE WAS A BRAWL AMONG
THE CROWD, AND CONSEQUENTLY TRIED TO REMOVE THE
ATTACKER FROM THE DEMONSTRATOR WITH AS LITTLE
PHYSICAL CONTACT AS POSSIBLE.



THE ATTACKER BEING PULLED FROM THE CROWD BY THE CROWD. THE DEMONSTRATORS, COLLECTIVELY, WERE ANGERED BY BOTH THE PHYSICAL ATTACK AND THE VERY REAL THREAT THAT THE POLICE COULD CHARGE AND AGAIN BEGIN TO DOUSE THE GROUP WITH PEPPER-SPRAY.



THE ATTACKER BEING PULLED FROM THE CROWD BY THE CROWD. THE DEMONSTRATORS, COLLECTIVELY, WERE ANGERED BY BOTH THE PHYSICAL ATTACK AND THE VERY REAL THREAT THAT THE POLICE COULD CHARGE AND AGAIN BEGIN TO DOUSE THE GROUP WITH PEPPER-SPRAY.



THE ATTACKER BEING PULLED FROM THE CROWD BY THE CROWD.THE DEMONSTRATORS, COLLECTIVELY, WERE ANGERED BY BOTH THE PHYSICAL ATTACK AND THE VERY REAL THREAT THAT THE POLICE COULD CHARGE AND AGAIN BEGIN TO DOUSE THE GROUP WITH PEPPER-SPRAY.



A COUNTER-DEMONSTRATOR SHOWING HER SUPPORT FOR THE UNITED STATES AND ITS IMPENDING MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST AFGHANISTAN.



AN ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATOR TO THE LEFT,
COUNTER-DEMONSTRATORS TO THE RIGHT.
THE POST FROM SOMEBODY'S SIGN CUTS THE PHOTO
(AND A COUNTER-DEMONSTRATOR) VERTICALLY.



A DEMONSTRATOR STANDS ON A SIDEWALK
NEWSPAPER BOX FOR A BETTER VIEW. A SIGN
GIVES DIRECTIONS TO TOURISTS ON THE LEFT.
A HOTEL WAVES ITS U.S. FLAG ON THE RIGHT.



DEBATES BEGAN ON THE SIDEWALKS
BETWEEN ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATORS AND
COUNTER-DEMONSTRATORS. OTHERS CAME OUT OF
CURIOSITY, AND WATCHED QUIETLY FROM THE SIDES.



DEBATES BEGAN ON THE SIDEWALKS
BETWEEN ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATORS AND
COUNTER-DEMONSTRATORS. OTHERS CAME OUT OF
CURIOSITY, AND WATCHED QUIETLY FROM THE SIDES.



AT THE HEAD OF THE ANTI-CAPITALIST CONVERGENCE COLUMN. HERE THE A.C.C. DEMONSTRATORS WERE STALLED IN THE ROAD BY POLICE BLOCKING THEIR FORWARD PROGRESS. THE POLICE WOULD THEN BLOCK THE REMAINING ROADS LEADING INTO AND AWAY FROM THIS PLAZA IN FRONT OF THE WORLD BANK BUILDING, IN EFFECT HOLDING THE DEMONSTRATORS CAPTIVE FOR THE NEXT FEW HOURS IN AN ATTEMPT TO PREVENT THEM FROM JOINING A LARGER RALLY OCCURRING IN D.C. THAT AFTERNOON.



MORNING.

POLICE OFFICERS PUT ON THEIR RIOT GEAR, EQUIPMENT WHICH HAS A VERY DISTORTING AND DEHUMANIZING EFFECT ON THE HUMANS BEHIND THE MASKS. AS A RESULT, THE ABILITY OF BOTH THE POLICE AND THE DEMONSTRATORS TO SEE ONE OTHER, ULTIMATELY, AS 'PEOPLE' IS PUSHED EVEN FURTHER OUT OF REACH, CREATING AN EMOTIONAL AND INTELLECTUAL DISCONNECTION AND ESCALATING TENSIONS VERY EARLY ON.



D.C. POLICE OFFICERS STAND
BEHIND BARRICADES IN FRONT OF THE
'WORLD BANK GROUP' BUILDING.



A PAIR OF YOUNG WOMEN SITS IN FRONT OF A LINE OF
POLICE OFFICERS WHO ARE BLOCKING ONE OF THE
ROADS LEADING INTO AND AWAY FROM THE
PLAZA AT THE WORLD BANK BUILDING.



LOOKING OVER THE A.C.C. BANNER TOWARDS THE
LINE OF D.C. POLICE OFFICERS BLOCKING THE ROAD.



ANTI-CAPITALIST CONVERGENCE DEMONSTRATORS
MARCH DOWN A D.C. STREET WHILE POLICE OFFICERS
(AND JOURNALISTS) FLANK THE SIDES. THE OFFICERS
EVENTUALLY 'HERDED' THE MARCH INTO THE PLAZA
WHERE THEY WERE, IN EFFECT, DETAINED FOR HOURS.



ONE OF THE MORNING'S FIRST STAND-OFFS.
A DEMONSTRATOR LOOKS THROUGH THE A.C.C.
BANNER TOWARDS A LINE OF D.C. POLICE
OFFICERS BLOCKING THE ROAD.



"I SEE A WAR," TO PARAPHRASE.
DEMONSTRATORS LOOK THROUGH THE
"ANTI-CAPITALIST CONVERGENCE AGAINST WAR . . ."
BANNER TOWARDS A LINE OF D.C. POLICE
OFFICERS BLOCKING THE ROAD.



POLICE OFFICERS USE THEIR BATONS TO PUSH
PROTESTERS WHO ARE ATTEMPTING TO MOVE
THE MARCH FORWARD DOWN A D.C. STREET.



POLICE MOVE IN ON THE MARCHERS. A LONE
DEMONSTRATOR IN A BALACLAVA STANDS SEEMINGLY
STILL IN THE MIDST OF THE CHAOTIC MASS
OF BODIES AND RIOT GEAR.



A POLICE OFFICER'S ARM-PATCH READS:
"WASHINGTON D.C. THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE."
DEMONSTRATORS AND A PHOTOGRAPHER BACK AWAY
AS ANOTHER OFFICER, SHOULDER DROPPED FORWARD
LIKE AN NFL FOOTBALL LINEBACKER, CHARGES.



A DEMONSTRATOR SCREAMS, AND ANOTHER HOLDS
OUT HER FINGERS IN THE V-SHAPE OF A PEACE SIGN,
AS THE POLICE MOVE INTO THE LINE OF PROTESTERS.



A DEMONSTRATOR SITS ON THE SIDEWALK
IN FRONT OF A ROW OF RETAIL STORES, HIS
HANDS EXTENDED, VISIBLE AND EMPTY IN
FRONT OF HIM, AS A POLICE OFFICER
SOAKS HIM WITH PEPPER-SPRAY.



A PEPPER-SPRAYED DEMONSTRATOR
WRITHES IN THE STREET AS OFFICERS MOVE ON.

PIPING, USED TO SUPPORT THE CLOTH
PROTEST-SIGNS, LIES BROKEN IN THE ROAD.

AND ALL OF THIS IMPOSED AMONG THE OBJECTS
OF OUR EVERY-DAY: 'USA TODAY' SIDEWALK BOXES,
GARBAGE CANS, PEDESTRIANS, CYCLISTS,
'NO PARKING' SIGNS, CAMPAIGN BANNERS
STRUNG UP ON CHAIN-LINK FENCES,
TRAFFIC LIGHTS, TREES, AUTOMOBILES. . .



THIS DEMONSTRATOR WAS KNOCKED TO THE GROUND AND ARRESTED AFTER HE YELLED SOMETHING UNINTELLIGIBLE AND HELD HIGH HIS MIDDLE-FINGER TOWARDS POLICE WHO HAD BEEN PEPPER-SPRAYING ANOTHER MARCHER.



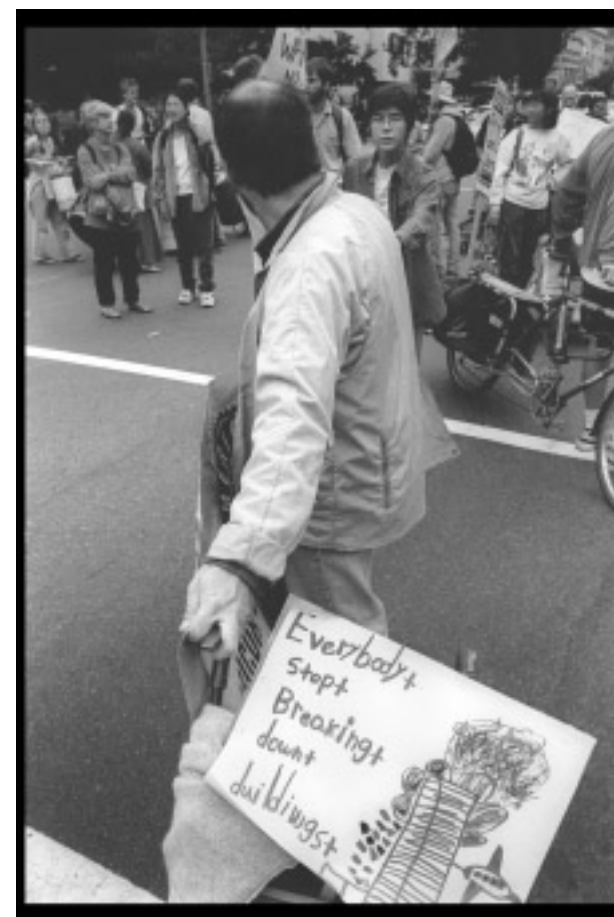
THE DEMONSTRATORS, HANDCUFFED AND FORCED TO KNEEL, ARE SHOWN OFF LIKE TROPHIES AS THEY ARE SHOWN OFF TO AN ON-LOOKING OFFICER, WHOSE HAND HANGS INTO THE FRAME AT THE TOP LEFT CORNER OF THE PHOTO.



A DEMONSTRATOR SCREAMS, IN WHAT SEEMS TO BE
EQUAL PARTS ANGER AND FRUSTRATION,
TO THE ACCOMPANYING CROWD;

ANOTHER, LOOKING TIRED AND DISTRAUGHT
THROWS HER FIST INTO THE AIR;

AND, OUTSIDE THE FRAME, A LINE OF
POLICE OFFICERS IN RIOT GEAR
PENS IN THE MARCHERS.



THIS PHOTOGRAPH AND THE ONE FOLLOWING
ARE THE ONLY TWO OF THE 34 ON THIS SITE FROM
THE MARCH ON 30 SEPTEMBER. SUNDAY'S MARCH,
THOUGH ALSO VERY EMOTIONAL FOR MANY, WAS
MUCH MORE RESTRAINED, AND MANY PARENTS
BROUGHT THEIR YOUNG CHILDREN.



THIS PHOTOGRAPH AND THE ONE PREVIOUS ARE THE ONLY TWO OF THE 34 ON THIS SITE FROM THE MARCH ON 30 SEPTEMBER. SUNDAY'S MARCH, THOUGH ALSO VERY EMOTIONAL FOR MANY, WAS MUCH MORE RESTRAINED, AND MANY PARENTS BROUGHT THEIR YOUNG CHILDREN.



SELF-CONSCIOUSLY, I WRITE THAT THIS LAST PHOTOGRAPH OF THE GROUP COULD BE A BIT OF A CLICHÉD WAY TO END: A YOUNG WOMAN GETS COMFORT AND A MASSAGE FROM FRIENDS, EXHAUSTED AT THE END OF A LONG, TIRING DAY, BUT THAT'S WHAT'S GOING ON . . .

The United States began bombing Afghanistan on Sunday, 7 October. On the evening of Monday, 8 October, the Chicago Coalition Against War & Racism led its second consecutive night of demonstrations against the bombing. The protests began with a rally and speakers at the Federal Building in downtown Chicago. The few hundred assembled people then marched northwards, ending their march at the Tribune Towers. Traffic on Chicago's famed Michigan Avenue was stopped, at least in the north-bound direction, for an hour or more as the protesters moved from the sidewalks to the streets.

m. rhoades / 33RaM.org



CHICAGO, IL
ANTI-WAR / PRO-PEACE DEMONSTRATION
08 OCTOBER 2001

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER: INDYMEDIA.ORG / CHICAGO INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER: CHICAGO.INDYMEDIA.ORG / CHICAGO COALITION AGAINST WAR & RACISM: CHICAGOANTIWAR.ORG

















MICHAEL L. RHOADES

Increasingly, by choice or by accident, this is the role our nation has taken: the role of those who make peaceful revolution impossible by refusing to give up the privileges and the pleasures that come from the immense profits of overseas investments. I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Mike L. Rhoades is a Chicago photographer from Pittsburgh, PA. This series of photos, of and about people, focuses on Mike's simple and strong belief in cultural autonomy. With close attention paid to world politics and regimented discrimination policies, his work has taken him to East Timor as an observer during the referendum in 1999, to Cuba, and to Chiapas, Mexico with the organization Doctors Without Borders. The themes of working class people and self-sustainability are ongoing in his work. Creating images carefully rigged to exclude himself, he is able to capture moments of living energy as if he was never there.

In Chicago, Mike can be found in his apartment processing rolls and rolls of negatives, listening to Live Skull, Ornette Coleman, or The Ex. He can also be found walking the streets of the city with his dog, Ali.

R REVIEWS

Reviewers:
Jamie Aikman (JA)
Star Black (SB)
Al Burian (AB)
William Evans (WE)
J Ryan Kee (JRK)
Dave Laney (DL)
Gregory Lindquist (GL)
Adam Mitchell (AM)
Dan Nagelberg (DN)

IMPORTANT NOTE TO THOSE SENDING REVIEW MATERIAL!

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MEDIAREADER: POST BOX 641544, CHICAGO, IL 60644



BOOK

SOUNDTRACKS TO THE WHITE REVOLUTION: WHITE SUPREMACIST ASSAULTS ON YOUTH MUSIC SUBCULTURE ★★★★★

Center for New Community: POB 346066 Chicago IL 60634 / newcomm.org

Once I realized that this book was actually an *anti*-racist publication I was more eager to read it, although I was always a little nervous about reading a bright red book with a big swastika on it in public. Moving past the cover, the book itself is written in easily digestible chunks. The authors provide background, in-depth information, and a list of record labels associated with three of the major groups of white power music, The National Socialist Black Metal scene, White Power Skinheads, and "Noise Nazis." The writing is pretty straight-forward and very informative. You'll learn all those things you never quite knew, like the significance of '88 in white power circles, the difference between SHARPs and "boneheads," and other fun trivia. The whole time I was reading the book I couldn't help but recognize that it is propaganda. Anti-racist propaganda is still propaganda, but short-changing bigots doesn't really bother me either.

DESIGN: 3 COLOR COVER / B&W INTERIOR ★★★★★

The unease associated with white power symbolism and pictures of really fucking metal, really fucking white guys, aside, this book is very tight on the aesthetics end. The page layout is well done, along with the nearly symbolic use of black on white vs. white on black text. The only negative I found was that after a few days of careful reading the cover came completely unglued. Otherwise, very easy on the eyes. (WE)



MUSIC

ABCS "S/T" CD ★

Troubleman Unlimited: 16 Willow St. Bayonne NJ 07002 / troublemanunlimited.com

A grating and truly unlistenable instrumental trio of repetitive sax and accordion licks atop ambient, jazzy drumming. Brooklyn/DC-based acid jazz art core. I don't want to hear this disc again, but I would go check out this band live. I have the feeling that what they are doing is not meant to be documented in this type of recorded format.

DESIGN ★★

A Scooby Do-ish x-ray drawing of the trio with a cheesy green glow. Goofy. (DL)

THE APPLESEED CAST ★★★

"LOW LEVEL OWL: VOLUME 1"

"LOW LEVEL OWL: VOLUME 2"

Deep Elm Records: POB 36939 Charlotte NC 28236 / deepelm.com

Deep Elm created their unpopular stigma quickly, releasing second rate emo bands that kind of sorta sound like Sunny Day Real Estate or many of the other thousands of knock-offs the emo-pop genre has produced. While fans of the genre were brandishing their "What is emo?" guns, Deep Elm bands slowly developed. The Appleseed Cast no longer sound like a Sunny Day Real Estate ripoff, which is good (before they went by the name "December's Tragic Drive" which I believe was a Sunny Day lyric — or was it Mineral?), although a bit suspicious. I wonder if they all stopped wearing those huge baggy pants and those giant beaded chain wallets, too! Ha, I know their past fashion is irrelevant, but man, was that funny. Their

sound has transformed into something more lush, spending a lot of time experimenting in the studio (with Ed Ross, the Kansas City guy known for his work with Coalesce, The Get Up Kids, and The Casket Lottery). Although not as epic as the press release hype says it is, the two CD set (each sold separately) does contain many moments of interest. I'm surprised by how much my ears perked during the duration of the recording. I wouldn't say they've matured, but they've certainly tapped into a strong creative flow. There are plenty of parts in which the songs become drony trite, which leads me to believe that this release might have been better off as a single CD with the songs about half as long.

DESIGN ★★★★★

The modernist aesthetic compiled with serif type and an antique look is a nice even balance that makes for quality design. Tasteful typography and a grasp on negative space. They play an artsy elusive card by not placing song titles on the back, although waste the space on the back by just keeping it blank. At least put something in there! I don't care, anything! Random ink drips or photos of all the groupies, there just needs to be something there. The consistency between the two records works, but I wish there were more accents to distinguish the two apart. Perhaps introducing different color schemes or a stronger accent than the current doubling of the feather on the cover would help. (VC)

ARAB ON RADAR "YAHWEH OR THE HIGHWAY" ★★★

Skin Graft Records

Yet another retroactively unfortunate band name and album title for the post September 11 era! Not that offending people's sensibilities is off the agenda for AOR, considering song titles such as "Semen on the Mount," and lyrics such as "your kids are not safe from us homosexuals," or—oh, I can't even decide what other lyrics to quote: it's not like there's a couple of real snarlers in there, it's like literally every line was concocted for maximum cringe-factor. It's almost impressive, actually, the sheer scatology of it all. I guess I'd file this as following the path of bands like Killdozer or Alice Donut with it's—you know—dark sexual themes and such. But whereas those bands always pushed things in a direction where the irony was implicit, Arab On Radar never give the game away. Is this Herman Melville's Moby Dick or the proverbial room full of monkeys with typewriters banging out Moby Dick by coincidental tantrum-bashings? Geniuses playing dumb or dummies empty aping the gestures of geniuses? Does it matter? I get the feeling even AOR don't quite know quite what they are doing, but, as they themselves put it, "our product sells to the cesspool generation." That is, perhaps, the darkest sentiment on the whole fuck-fest of a record.

DESIGN ★★★★★

Ingo Ebeling examines the covers of the records I am reviewing. On Arab On Radar: "Oh, MediaReader is going to hate this." "Why do you say that?" I ask. "There are no computers involved, the layout looks almost cut and paste, haphazard, childish!" he rails. "MediaReader only gives good design reviews to the high tech stuff. Like this..." He picks up the Hal Al Shedad record. "Oh, yeah, they'll go crazy for this. Total computers. A little seventies architectural influence, a bit of ripping off old jazz records, yes, just the sort of tired aesthetic MediaReader goes for!" (AB)

ASPERA "SUGAR & FEATHERED" CD ★★★★★

Big Wheel Rec: bigwheelrec.com

This is not what I expected at all. Although I had never heard Aspera before this CD, I had imagined they were one of the slew of drone-driven, repetitive instrumental

post-indie rock bands that are currently flooding the market—I stand corrected! Aspera play moody and dark stoner rock that is part goth, part Beatles. Not the poppy Beatles material, but the weirder stuff that plays with recording techniques, vocals, reverb and bizarre instruments. There's a lot going on with this band that is very cool. Parts are even reminiscent of Godspeed You Black Emperor! with a knack for Neil Young-style songwriting and guitar interplay. Wow, this is great stuff, not typical of the onslaught of crappy records that have been released recently. You should pick this up.

DESIGN: ASPERA, APT. 13 ★★★★★

Trippy, psych rock collage-style design. Too bad they used the mirror image of the same hand on the inside to create a set of hands. Cool and tasteful use of Photoshop. Crazy blurred photo of the band in goat masks on the back of the insert. Eerie and dark photos of nature with dream-like collages. (DL)

AZURE RAY "NOVEMBER" CD ★★★★★

Saddle Creek: POB 8554 Omaha NB 68108 / saddle-creek.com

This female powered duo from Athens delivers five songs of almost vocally perfect composition. Smooth harmonizing vocals over soundscape backdrops of guitar and cello. Dark but optimistic. Reminds me of Mazzy Star at times, but minus the lounge-y-ness and void of the heroin shtick. I wasn't into it on the first listen, thought it needed a bit more swing rather than its present straightforwardness. Still would like it to swing more, but on reevaluation I think it's a damn good record. This is one of the few records that Saddle Creek has released lately that has vocals that aren't able to be pinpointed as Omaha. I hope Saddle Creek pursues more of this diversity for their roster.

DESIGN ★

Red-ish paintings that are way too hippy in flavor for my tastes. If I saw this in a record store, I would immediately think it was a jam band. Not into the cover at all. (DL)

BE "THISTUPIDREAM" ★★★

Brother Yoric: POB 140935 Dallas TX 75214

"Thistupidream" is BE's second release to date, and not one that will be filed away somewhere in a shoe box marked "NOT WORTHY." This band creates some powerful pop/rock that bends genres and takes you from 70's Americana to modern day Brit rock. The band consists of three brothers: Talley Summerlin (vocals), Mark Summerlin (guitars, backing vocals), and Paul Summerlin (bass, backing vocals), along with drummer Duke Boyne. The three brothers and Duke all sang in choir together, played in high school bands together, and all helped to buy the first instruments necessary to become BE. The four lads recently relocated to Austin, Texas, yet they recorded "Thistupidream" in random homes and locations over the course of three years in Fayetteville, Arkansas, where they truly feel at home. Some songs were done in a single take ("On the Last Day I Was Happy," "Raincoat," and "Space Rats"), while others spent many days and months in the process. The opening track, "On the Last Day I Was Happy," is a dreamy acoustic affair which may trick you into thinking the band was all about folk-type of numbers, which simply isn't true. When "The Corporal's Daughter" fully gets rolling, you will then realize the diversity that this band is capable of. From mellow acoustic songs to full on distorted ones, BE covers all the bases. If I can say one

thing about this band, it would have to be that they are melodic as all hell. This band is sure to please fans of Snow Patrol and Death Cab For Cutie.

DESIGN ★★★

It is obvious that Duke Boyne did the design for the cover artwork. The reason I say this is because BE's website won some praise from South by Southwest last year, and justifiably so. The cover photo is a melancholy image of your every-day living room in the late afternoon...the curtains closed because the sun is so intense. The back cover has a blurry image of what appears to be the upper portion of an elevator. Good record, good art. (JRK)

BILLION DOLLAR MISSION "THE CUP" EP ★★★★

Immigrant Sun Records: POB 150711 Brooklyn NY 11215

It seems that a lot of United States independent labels are trying to find bands in other parts of the world who sound like good domestic bands. Norway is a prime spot I guess because labels like Immigrant Sun and Deep Elm have found bands that are not black metal and are actually pretty good. It's cool for the labels because the record has already been released in the band's native country so they don't have to front any recording money. They are just "licensing" it or whatever here in America so all they have to do is send the existing European CD off to the pressing plant with their logo on it somewhere and they have a complete CD that took no work on their part. There is a really good chance that none of these bands will even get the chance to tour in the States but at least these labels are putting out a more world view on the indie/punkrock/hardcore/whatever scene. Billion Dollar Mission have a four song EP that has a Quicksand or Fireside feel to it, maybe with a little U2 thrown in. Mid-tempo hook-based hardcore/rock with good production. Nothing groundbreaking, but worth a chance if you see it in a store. Though I wish there were more than four songs recorded two years ago to go on, I see a lot of potential.

DESIGN ★★

A simple two page layout with different shades of orange and white to make some nautical star designs. The lyrics are inside along with small black and white pictures of the band members. You can tell they spent some time on it, but not a lot of time. It doesn't really say anything about the band. (JA)

BISCAYNE "YOU'D BUILD A ROBOT" CD ★★

Quincy Sharks: POB 3035 St. Charles IL 60174

A cross between Propagandhi and Face to Face. Lyrically in line with the "personal" F2F rather than the political Propagandhi. Fast, tight poppy punk that gets rewardingly aggressive at times, but then falls into the pop sensibility of morbidly bad pop punk.

DESIGN ★★

This is a ten panel folding insert. The color side is not very good, which includes the cover. Colored pencil drawings that are goofy and not so interesting. The b/w side, in contrast, is awesome. Film Noir style renderings of all the players, with the lyrics typewritten to their sides. The photos are super cool. I wish the front of this layout reflect the same level of creativity instead of settling for a funk metal style look. (DL)

BLUETIP "POST MORTEM ANTHEM" CD ★★★★

Dischord: 3819 Beecher St. NW Wash DC 20007 / dischord.com

The second retrospective album to hit the review stack this issue, the now defunct Bluetip release their last five previously unreleased songs, as well as five more from now out of print 7"s. I'm surprised this band was never more popular than they were. Driving DC punk rock that alternates between dissonance and melody. They fit well with K454 and other Dischord contemporaries, usually

exceeding expectations and crafting exceptionally solid songs with good vocals. Like their previous three albums, this one is strong and worth a listen by anyone who is interested in DC's contribution to the independent music scene. The informative liner notes make this a must have for all Bluetip fans.

DESIGN ★★★★★

Bluetip has always had amazing design. In fact, more people probably knew their first promo poster than knew the music on that album. It looked so nice that every record store across America put it up on their walls. Apart from the cover, this record is no exception to Jason Farrell's computer design wizardry. He manages to assemble all the songs lyrics along with a TON of info and personal writings about and from the band into this booklet, artfully. Some cues have definitely been taken and applied from Roygun, and out pops this album. It's beautiful, artsy, and extremely functional. Italic font and bold normal lettering separates the personal notes from the lyrics, bold photos with saturated masks on them define the spreads. I've never understood Bluetip's musing with Japanese characters, but this shows up as well. Now the only thing left is the cover, which I don't get. The photo used is the least inspiring of all the photos in the booklet, and the titling of the name is hokey, angled, and, what I would criticize as, a bad use of Illustrator in conjunction with rastered graphics. If they changed the cover photo and the titling of the band name, this thing would have been 5+ stars. Really, a great job though. (DL)

BOB NANNA/ELIZABETH ELMORE SPLIT 7"/CDEP ★★★

Troubleman Unlimited: 16 Willow St. Bayonne NJ 07002

Another installment in the Troubleman Solo Singles Series delivers two pleasant tracks for your listening pleasure. Bob Nanna, formerly of Braid and currently in Hey Mercedes sits with an acoustic guitar and softly sings "Forgiveness," sounding a bit Lou Barlowesque. Elizabeth Elmore of Sarge incorporates piano and organ on her sweetly sung song entitled "You Blink." If you were a fan of either band, this would be some good material for a collector. It's always interesting to hear what a single member of a collective can produce. Both of these tracks deliver personal sides to the artists that most listeners have not heard before.

DESIGN: GREGG BERNSTEIN AT HYDRAFUSE ★★★

The design to the EP is pretty minimal. The insert is a single photo of a train, next to some mountains. It's actually a cool picture that may or may not reflect the train reference on Bob Nanna's track. (DN)

BOYLION "B A SELECT, START" ★★★

Mo Records: 4932 Linscott Ave. Downers Grove IL 60515

Dreamy guitar chords followed up with mellow driving emo, you won't be surprised that this band is from Chicago, or the nearby 'burb of Elmhurst, IL. The first few tracks begin with that Sea and Cake/Archer Prewitt chroon, a whirligig of simple guitar which is the strong suit of the album. After that it is pretty much any emo rocker for himself, as it has the same angry balladness and tinkling pianos as your average Get Up Kids album. As their debut album Boylion have yet to be embraced by America at large, although they share label space with noted indie acts Kleenex Girl Wonder and Mt. St. Helens. I found "Seton" a pretty track with rough edges to be my favorite, also "Standing Ovation" which serves as the albums cornerstone, making this emo standard. I am not overwhelmed, yet I imagine these kids put on a good live show. Hopefully if you live outside the Chicago nexus you'll be getting some exposure to Boylion if they hit up the winter (cold) tour circuit.

DESIGN: M. BINGAMAN, TRAVIS MURPHY, MATT RORN ★★★

Awwww.....They made their logo look like a Nintendo cartridge sticker. Super Mario be damned! (SB)

BURST "CONQUEST: WRITHE" ★★★

Prank: POB 419892 San Francisco CA 94142

Burst brings forth a collection of screamo hardcore songs that will tear you all up. I don't really know too much about this band (where they are from, who they are), so all I have to go on is the music. Loud, fast, and loud is what we are dealing with here, kids. "Sordid Leader" is the first wave of the attack, and it wastes no time in revealing what the music is all about. The title track is strangely melodic and extremely fast, reminding me a lot of Slayer. "Promised Faith" follows the title track and at the beginning, seems to slow things down a bit....but that was just the intro. Vocalist Linus Jagerskog screams with intensity as the band (who seem to be quite talented musicians) weave an intricate web of obtrusive sound. My days of loud hardcore have since past, but that doesn't mean I can't appreciate a decent hardcore band every now and again. I think this band is sure to please fans of Earth Crisis, Slayer, and Snapcase....and maybe even some death metal fans.

DESIGN ★★★

The thing that is so strange about the artwork, is that it doesn't really fit with the band or the music. The cover is a sepia-tone photo of what looks like the knobs under the counter for your sink. The cover is split into two halves, the photo on one side and a creamy white color on the other. Aside from that, the artwork is pretty plain on the insides and on the back cover....minimalism can be a good thing sometimes. (JRK)

THE CABLE CAR THEORY "THE DECONSTRUCTION" ★★★

Immigrant Sun: POB 150711 Brooklyn NY 11215

Have you ever heard of Shoulder? You should have. They were a band from Guelph, Canada about 6 years ago during the emo boom who played aggressive and thick emo core with tight guitar interplay and gruffy vocals. They were an exceptional band who brought, along with the long defunct Gus, the genre a needed and tasteful facelift of aggression, tying in great musicianship with well crafted and smart songs. Well, CCT plays very similar music but adds a bit of funk every now and then, maybe akin to HWM. This is a MUCH better record than their past efforts. Six years ago I would have thought this record was great. Though a solid record, I'm uncertain of it's validity right now.

DESIGN ★★

This has a similar look to their past releases. A degenerated font for their name, an over-saturated detail from a painting on the front and insert. The full painting is on display on the back of the CD. It's harmless enough but doesn't do much for me. (DL)

CADILLAC BLINDSIDE ★

"THE ALLEGORY OF DEATH AND FAME"

Fueled by Ramen: POB 12563, Gainesville FL 32604

My roommate said it best when he said the Get Up Kids should never have released the Four Minute Mile album. Maybe I wouldn't be so harsh on this band if they didn't blatantly deny (on their press-sheet) that they weren't trying to sound like the new adult contemporary (aka: neo indie rock/what passes for emo these days) the aforementioned Get Ups, Hot Rod Circuit, any band on Vagrant etc... They have the requisite whiny/pained, girlfriend-just-broke-up-with-me vocals, and absolutely nothing

new going on in the instrument dept. I was promised something other than "songs about girls and touring," a band shying from the "whiny, ultra-poppy, kid-core emo," yet with lyrics like "slowly we kissed goodbye, I feel I'm left behind. I'm left behind...There's nothing a drink can't fix..." I just don't see (or hear) otherwise.

DESIGN ★★

The design and pictures of the band would lead you to believe the band Cadillac Blindside should sound a lot different. Maybe this combination of judging by the cover and the press sheet is what made me so bitter towards them in the first place. The cover picture is taken from an unaccredited book of some sort that looks maybe biblical? A nice red calligraphy style border surrounds it, and on the yellow parchment style look of the package it works really well (along with the lyrics inside which are done in the same color in cursive writing) the song titles and somber band photo on the back round out the simplistic, and unfortunately misleading package. (AM)

CHAMPAIGN KISS ★★

"DANCING IN THE POCKETS OF THIEVES"

Troubleman Unlimited: 16 Willow St. Bayonne NJ 07002 / troublemanunlimited.com

What do you get when you mix My Bloody Valentine, Ministry, Sonic Youth and Her Space Holiday in a blender? Why, you get Champaign Kiss, of course! This may sound like an odd mixture of sounds, but Champaign Kiss pulls it off without a hitch and perhaps creates a new genre along the way. The band consists of Russell White and Michelle Mascovitch of Camera Obscura and Jesse Johnson of Johnny Angel. Together with guitars, drum machines, and a boat load of samples, the trio combines their three voices into one hollowed scream in the night. Each song is a brutal assault on the senses, leaving behind any and all notions of new-wave pop with their enormous wall of difficult sound. This is music to challenge yourself with, and not for the faint at heart.

DESIGN ★★

The cover is definitely a visual representation of the music contained within. Perhaps a mix between TRON and some LSD, the cover features a reversed collage of photos with two buildings that reach up into the sky and melt into each other. Blue and yellow lines are found throughout, and the type is as hard to read as the music is to listen too (again, not a bad thing). There are a few live photos throughout, which is nice, because then you get the feeling that the music is really created by people. (JRK)

THE CHASE THEORY ★★★

"...IN PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE"

Onedaysavior Recordings: POB 372 Williston Park NY 11596

I'd be interested in hearing more material by this Bradenton, Florida trio. Their press release states that the band does not feel it is emo but I can kind of understand why people would claim that they are. Much of the music contains those grand choruses that consist of a lot of "whoa oh" melody that you'll find in emo but also in a lot of standard rock. However, I was happy to see that the press release wrote that one of the influences the band draws on is the Police. Ultimately, the music sounds a little more mature than some of the other bands that would share the boundaries of emo and rock. Out of the five songs, three are true winners while the other two seem out of place. For instance, "Open Road" sounds like a song written by a bad jam band that played too many classic rock covers and "Faster We Run" sounds a bit like an '80s glam-rock ballad. I wouldn't mind that so much, but the intro guitar and bass sounds a little like bad funk that just sucks; sorry.

DESIGN: JAIME MCCAUSLAND, BRAD ★★

Some nice pictures of some architecture and streets in Europe, I can't quite tell where though. Lyrics included, can't beat that. (DN)

CRUSH KILL DESTROY ★★★★★

"PUNCTUATE OUR PHRASES"

Makoto Recordings: www.makotorecordings.com

The last memorable release I remember from the Makoto kids was the first Tristeza record, which took the instrumental punk/indie genre to crossover with swirly accessibility. It was post-rock that was easy to digest. Crush Kill Destroy is a foursome that seems to follow the same intentions. Don't let me lead you to believe that the bands are remotely similar, because they're not. Crush Kill Destroy has a dynamic sound that blends in and out throughout the entire album, but with such a fluid quality that it seems so seamless. Listeners will certainly appreciate the craft on this record. On the turn of a dime, they'll switch from a wistful June of '44-ish drone into a discordant Shellac-y chaos. Sometimes there are vocals. Yes, the influences do seem to stem from all the classic Midwestern rockers (Slint), so I'd like to see them expand and try other amazing Midwestern styles (The Aluminum Group and Lonesome Organist are good starts). It's all on time and it's all tight. I would hope the band name would reflect such dynamics. Crush Kill Destroy would be more fitting as Bunnies Satan Yoshi or something a little more appropriate. Look into it.

DESIGN ★★

The layout is clean and basic, but leaves much more to be desired. It's a painting of some sort. Looks like a lot of kites. Or Japanese lanterns, but that could be the yellow in me. It's not very "Crush Kill Destroy"-looking at all. There are no car crashes or Godzillas running amok. It's basic sans serifed modernist design. I really don't have much to say to that at all. White type on a 20% light gray doesn't make for much legibility, either. Is there something you're trying to hide? (VC)

CURSIVE "BURST AND BLOOM" CD ★★

Saddle Creek: POB 8554 Omaha NB 68108 / saddle-creek.com

Saddle Creek has been killing it for the last few years. I'm curious to see what's going to happen to the label in the future. They're responsible for releasing great record after great record, from Lullaby for the Working Class to Bright Eyes and the Faint, and of course Cursive. Well Cursive is the band that I haven't been sold on. Their past releases haven't done much for me, though I occasionally find myself confronted with them at parties or friend's houses. It's always been a bit poppy for me and lacking the darkness of the aforementioned SC bands. This was the initial reaction upon listening to Cursive's new EP. It is in line with their past work, very much the same actually, but also very different. The songs are jerkier with strange ups and downs. It rages and then stops dead for whispered vocals before the music blows up full blast. Seems like the typical 1994 emo formula, right? Well, it is but they manage to pull it off with a bit more conviction and with really good lyrics. The first song was a complete turn off on first listen, but I've had a change of heart about that one too. I think anyway. The problem is, the first two songs are about being in a band and the seedy underbelly of the business end of things. I usually think that when bands get self-referential, they're finished being a band. Over-indulgence usually breeds narrow thoughts and any insight you could once

give is suddenly void. But I must admit, Cursive manages to pull it off, and pretty well. This is, by far, my favorite release by this band. Good work.

DESIGN ★

Not much here. Abstract image of some flowers with some terrible pink-ish-orange trash going on. Thankfully the lyrics are in here. I wish the design reflected the complexity or insightfulness of the band. (DL)

DARKEST HOUR "SO SEDATED, SO SECURE" ★★★★★

Victory Records

Darkest Hour play brutal and crushing (oh, I can't believe I just described something as "brutal and crushing-" I feel like Pushead writing for Thrasher magazine) death metal with the exact correct ratio of melodic breaks to make this record awwwesome. This has become the proverbial "hasn't left the CD player since I got it for review" record. Probably the best example of the short-haired-not-very-tough-guys-doing-metal genre I've heard since Catharsis' "Samsara." No lyrics about demons or beating up dudes who smoke pot (hey, it is on Victory) is an added bonus. If you are a fan of this type of stuff, this is a great album.

DESIGN

A fairly unpleasant color scheme (but not like metal unpleasant, like office wallpaper unpleasant) and some kind of map theme going on here. Not bad. The insert has a degenerated photo of the singer where he looks like a beautiful woman. (AB)

DEAD RED SEA "BIRDS" ★★

Deep Elm Records: POB 36939 Charlotte NC 28236

Dead Red Sea aren't breaking any new ground on this release but what they are playing sounds pretty good. Aside from a couple of upbeat instrumentals (that start rocking you and then take you nowhere) the album creates a pretty, somber, and lulling atmosphere. D.R.S. are definitely a logical, well fitting piece of the Deep Elm puzzle, but if your baby brother had chewed their piece up and it wouldn't fit anymore, you could probably enjoy the final picture without them.

DESIGN ★★

The minimal booklet that does come with this CD does a good job of conveying the mellow, almost "mystic" mood of the album itself. The colors are a dark, dark purple, looking like blood in the night. The image that unfolds along the front and back page slightly resembles a bird (the title of the record) and the inside has the minimal amount of information about the band and the song titles. One thing about the songs titles that D.R.S. do, is something I never understand when a band does, and that is putting the individual band member's names next to the songs that they wrote. Unless you're the Beatles, or each member plans on an extensive solo career following the break-up of Dead Red Sea, I really don't see the point. I mean you're in the band together, why should you want individual credit? (AM)

THE DICKIES "ALL THIS AND PUPPET STEW" CD ★★

Fat Wreck Chords: POB 193690 SF CA 94119 / fatwreck.com

It took the Dickies five years to write and record this album, and while I would hope for something a bit more given the year span, this is a grown-up sounding album. It's strange, almost alternative rock, kinda pop punk, but with vocals that almost sound like Geddy Lee. It has the triumphant qualities of Queen while still maintaining the production value that you would expect from Fat. Actually, it's the production that kills this album for me. Everything sounds so pristine and is articulated perfectly

through the latest compressors and EQs and computer programs. I'm looking for the humans here, as I'm not fully convinced that Fat doesn't have a huge mastermind behind their facade—a white haired, cigar smoking genius—who has invented a computer program that gives ten or so variables and outputs ten songs in respect to those variables. And voilà, you have the new band, or the old band's new record. Really, what the Dickies need to do is get an old John Bonham-style Ludwig drum set, an old SVT bass amp, and an early '60s Marshall, and go record with Steve Albini. I assure you that this album would be much more kick ass under those circumstances.

DESIGN ★★

Funny and goofy Punch and Judy drawings. It's actually pretty good but a little too realistic or polished for me. The whole package is a bit too polished actually. Nice drawings nonetheless. The lyrics would be nice, guys. (DL)

THE DISMEMBERMENT PLAN "CHANGE" CD ★★

DeSoto: POB 60932 Wash. DC 20039

I walked into a convenience store in Madison to find this record playing while I (unrelatedly) tried to find a pair of earplugs. I got to the counter to make my purchase and a frat guy behind the counter turned to his friend who would ring me up (yet another fratishly styled fellow) and exclaimed: "This new Dismemberment Plan really is mind blowing. It's kinda like Floyd, but it's not!" Dumbfounded by the clarity of his realization, I knew I would never like this record. So this has been the most difficult review of the batch. I've kept putting it off and putting it off until it ended up being the only CD left. The songs took me completely off guard; I was expecting something much heavier and aggressive. "Change" is an odd pop record—a sophisticated combination of Neil Young, Can, the Beatles, Jawbox, Built To Spill and, yes, Pink Floyd. The vocals are well orchestrated, the drums are jammy, and the guitars fluctuate between clean and minimal to full blast and raging. Lots of echo effects and extraneous sounds in this package create an eerie mood. "Secret Curse" showcases some brilliant vocal work over music that will have you convinced that it could have appeared on "The Wall" until it bursts into a full blown rock part more indicative of Jawbox seven years ago. DP keep up the changes, forcing the listener to be on her toes, grabbing and demanding your attention. The drumming and vocals on this record are exceptional and really set it apart from other releases, forcing the songs into a quirky and highly attractive package that is pop driven, but isn't the smoothed over pop crap that you're used to hearing. So yes, despite my initial counter-reaction to those frat guys in the convenience store in Madison, this is a very good record and one of the best to come into review this time around.

DESIGN ★★

Full color booklet (on almost absurdly thick paper) that showcases, like the cover, photos of the sky that contain a small amount of the landscape still sticking up through the bottom of the frame. They're nice photos, and I love the feel that DP get from not removing the dust and scratches from these negatives before scanning them, but the font... I'm not into it at all. It's an old-timey circus font that doesn't seem to fit here, but it's used prominently throughout the entire layout! The song lyrics are handwritten and I think the vibe from the pen is much better. I would have liked to see this entire cover handwritten. It's a cool layout, it's just that damn font... (DL)

DOGWOOD "MATT ARAGON" ★★

Tooth and Nail Records: POB 12698 Seattle WA 98111

I don't want to bag on Christian punk but when I hear a singer say something like "I killed the son of God today. I built the cross where he was slain. My sins, the hands that held the hammer that drove the nails through his skin...I want to make it up. I want to die to myself for You," I get turned off. Personally, I'd much rather listen to songs about praising Satan or cruising for chicks, you can at least find the humor in that. Anyway, there's no doubt that Dogwood is a tight band but you've heard this all before without the "God helped me find the way, praise the lord, nails pierce the skin" stuff. If you're the kind of person that wants as much pop/punk/emo material as possible, sure, dig it. If you're totally down with the Christian punk, this is for you. Otherwise, this is completely unessential.

DESIGN: GREGG PATTERSON ★★

Enclosed is an explanation as to who Matt Aragon is and several pictures of people wearing red T-shirts with the name "Matt Aragon" on them. So who is this Matt Aragon? Apparently, outside of their long-time friends in California, he is the band's best friend. He not only supports the band, he humbles them and challenges them to be more like Jesus. Hoory for Matt. (DN)

ERASE ERRATA "OTHER ANIMALS" CD ★★

Troubleman Unlimited: 16 Willow St. Bayonne NJ 07002 / troublemanunlimited.com

Short, rocking, no-wave influenced songs that show hints of the Dog Faced Hermans and the Ex. Four women from San Francisco have come together to release an album full of jerky rhythm, rocking songs, and fantastic vocals. The guitar is so high pitched and chaotic—it's almost perfect. When reviewing records, there are two important piles that accumulate: one is kept and one is immediately sold to a record store. This record is going in the even shorter stack that will travel around with me in a van for seven weeks. You are highly encouraged to pick this up.

DESIGN ★★

You've got crazy bugs on the cover boxing over stacks of scrap machinery. Green, pink, and metallic gold. More hot pink on the inside along with a Dada-influenced collage. If they put the lyrics in here, it would've been five stars. Damn nice job! (DL)

EVISCERATE "BENEATH DYING SKIES" CDEP ★★

Revolutionary Audio: 160 Summit St. #1 Hyde Park MA 02136

This four track EP begins its grind early and follows up with steady death and sludgecore for approximately twenty-three minutes. Deamos, Manicle, Boltoo and Taranis invite you to listen closely to grisly fairytales "of being caked in mud/frozen to stone broken in shards/druids in judgment of war." Fully illustrated with medieval woodcuts of various tortures. Eviscerate wants us to know that this recording is for all who are true metal! Conveniently, this coverage of carnage and brutality is highlighted by the fact that this album is a benefit for the Colombia Support Network. CSN works to expose the horrors of guerilla, parliamentary and military warfare that has waged in Colombia and many other South and Middle American countries for several years. The destructive and senseless war on drugs has infiltrated all areas of culture and society in many countries, leaving them in poverty and without a sense of safety and a constant fear of government and various militants. Revolutionary Audio hopes to assist activist groups in Colombia and the United States with the sale of this CD, so buy it! To learn more about

the situation in Colombia and other Latin American countries try: "A Report by the Ecumenical Human Rights Commission of Ecuador"—colombiareport.org/plancolombia_ecua-dor.htm or read "News of a Kidnapping" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

DESIGN ★★

Evil Reds and Blacks adorn the cover appearing to be some kind of lone mountain top. The ancient symbol for the unrested soul is stamped on top. Creepy. (SB)

FIN FANG FOOM ★★★

"TEXTURE, STRUCTURE, AND THE CONDITION OF MOODS"

Lovitt Records: POB 248 Arlington VA 22210

Lovitt seems to be growing fairly soft these days. With releases from Bats and Mice, The Ben Davis Band, and now Fin Fang Foom, there's overwhelming proof that our record-headed friend is learning how to rock without yelling so much. Good thing for Lovitt that these new releases are on par with the angriest Four Hundred Years, Sleepytime, or Milemarker songs. Fin Fang Foom continue the Lovitt tradition of taking North Carolina/Virginia area bands that the locals are well aware of and unleashing their talents upon the rest of us, and I for one am rarely disappointed. FFF are quite an original band as well. They combine excellent musicianship with unique/original singing and lots of piano and other rarely used instruments. While this album did take longer for me to get into than the other "quieter" bands on the label I was happy that I took the time to let it grow on me.

DESIGN: CASEY BURNS ★★★

There is nothing fancy about the presentation of this record but the images match the atmosphere of the music almost perfectly. There are a couple of sepia-toned photos of crumbling/abandoned buildings and really not much else. I wish the lyrics were printed, as the vocalist sounds like he believes very strongly in what he is singing about. (AM)

FUGAZI "THE ARGUMENT" ★★★★★

Dischord: 3819 Beecher St. NW Wash. DC 20007

What can you say about a Fugazi record? What are you going to do, say it's bad? Who has the credentials? I will say this: I can't believe a band would put out an album entitled "End Hits" without intending it to be their last record. Then again, as Dave Laney pointed out, the new record is called "The Argument." I'm glad whoever was on the "let's make another" side of the argument won out. What will happen the day Fugazi calls it quits? For indie rockers, it's the unthinkable: what the prospect of Strom Thurman retiring is for right wing South Carolinians. In any case, I personally haven't been hugely into the last couple of Fugazi records, but I admit that they have left an impression. I can't listen to "Red Medicine" without instantly associating it to Transit Street, Providence, RI, where I lived when it came out. We got it at the same time as our downstairs neighbors, rotated it heavily, and when we weren't heavy rotating it you could hear them heavy rotating the hell out of it downstairs through the floorboards. Sometimes we'd be playing it both at once which lent it weird quadrophonic effects. That record I thought was about half good, and then "End Hits" I didn't really get into at all, despite living out on "the farm" in Siler City, NC, when it came out and being in a heavy reefer phase, which should have complimented what is assuredly the band's most stoner-friendly recording. But, personal preferences aside, all Fugazi albums seem to exist, for me, as landmarks,

soundtracks for specific times with which they become indelibly linked. That, I think, is one of the really amazing thing about the band: I am one of the many thousands of people who has formed a personal relationship with them, an experience which is at once intimate and specific, and at the same time arena-rock-generically cathartic in its universality. They manage to be massively popular, arguably the most successful independent band of all time (financially, influentially, creatively, ethically); at the same time, they maintain a very private, emotive connection with the audience more successfully than bands one tenth their size, for whom it should presumably be ten times as easy. Seeing Fugazi play is like hanging out with old friends, an amazing feat, considering that I've never had a personal interaction with any of the band members and am generally in the company of a couple thousand frat boys when the experience occurs. A new Fugazi record is like getting a letter from these same old pals. You might not agree with everything they say or the directions they go in, but you're always curious to know where they're at these days. ¶ That said, "The Argument" is my favorite Fugazi record since "In On The Killtaker," a return to form after a well-deserved period of experimentation. While I appreciated the fact that Fugazi was making a concerted effort not to sound like quote Fugazi unquote on their last records (i.e., not to sound like the million bands who "sound like Fugazi," meaning that they sound like the song "Waiting Room"), but it's nice to hear them back doing what they do best. There is still a lot of innovation going on here, but it doesn't sound forced or done simply for the sake of mold-breaking on principle—rather, the moments of innovation occur relatively naturally within the context of an album whose agenda seems to simply be a catchy, strong album. Highlights: "Full Disclosure" is practically hit single material, "Epic Problem" has already caused me epic problems by getting stuck in my head at the wrong moment and indicting my lifestyle of early December in Chicago, IL. Thanks a lot, dudes. The last song, "Argument," sums up our current political miasma with such perfect eloquence that it is astounding to think that it was written pre-Sept. 11 and is presumably about arguing whether to make a killer record or not. Way to go, and here's hoping they keep at it.

DESIGN: JEM COHEN, FUGAZI ★★★

The usual Jem Cohen/Fugazi team up produces the usual pleasant but somewhat esoteric results. I observed a panel of bohemians in Hamburg, Germany passing the LP around and critiquing it vehemently, insisting that the band photos look like a Volkswagen commercial and that the insert is "hideous." German people, though—their design sense is completely skewed by residual guilt about the Volkswagen. I think it's OK. The CD is actually nicer than the LP, one of the few records in existence where this is the case. This stems mainly from the middle fold out on the cover. If the LP opened in the center it would be the most killer thing of all time. Especially if it opened onto a band photo where they are on a plush rug in front of a fireplace, as does the Marvin Gaye/Diana Ross record of with such a design scheme. (AB)

FUGAZI "FURNITURE" CDEP ★★★★★

Dischord: 3819 Beecher St. NW Wash. DC 20007

This three song EP was released in conjunction with Fugazi's latest full-length, "The Argument." While the full-length is marked by many depths of complex sounds and songwriting, the EP is more of a rocker. Singing is broken up equally: 1 Ian, 1 Guy, 1 instrumental.

"Furniture" begins the record and immediately busts into jumpy guitar work with vocals to double it. It's in line with a few tracks off "End Hits" but a bit more difficult to get into. The last two songs are the jams. Upbeat and driving. I couldn't follow the lyric sheet to Guy's vocals on "Hello Morning" to save my life, but it rocks nonetheless. Unfortunately, these three songs lack the complexity of the new album that I find really groundbreaking for Fugazi, and, given the choice, I would much rather be hearing "The Argument."

DESIGN: JASON FERRELL, JEM COHEN, I. MACKAYE ★★★★★

That's a pretty serious cast of people responsible for this layout. As one would expect from seeing those names together, this is a nice package. Simple digipack with a few photos, the lyrics, and the misc info. The titles of the songs and the name of the band is hand stitched for bonus points! The CD is one of those mini-CDs that are set inside a ring of plastic. Nice record. (DL)

GARRISON "BE A CRIMINAL" ★★★★★

Revelation Records: POB 5232 Huntington Beach CA 92615

I have this general theory with Garrison that I've picked up with reviewing their two previous releases in various zines: The first song—and maybe the second—are incredibly strong rockers, followed with a half-hearted mass of mediocre throwaways. The earnestness is there, but for some reason the music comes across as more flatulent than adrenalized. This Boston, MA quartet has finally proven my theory wrong. Garrison have a better grasp of who they are and began working on being a dynamic band rather than unintentionally churning out the generic melodic hardcore. Not only is the first song good, but they're pretty consistent with quality throughout the record. The concept behind the entire album is interesting, focusing on the different aspects of criminal behavior. Garrison wants to be the bad guy, and I guess that's pretty punk rock.

DESIGN ★★

Bassist Jason Carlin is in charge of this and while it's clean and follows the band's concept successfully, it looks like a Andy Mueller/ohiogirl-influenced (and how many of those have we seen?) piece with bad lighting in the photographs. It a very photo-based layout depicting various "crime" related objects: security camera, locks, alarm switchbox, and, um, an escalator (Andy Mueller again). I would have liked to see a 17-year old millionaire with a rifle standing on top of a building preparing to set on a killing spree because they lost their job at the dot com. Now, that would be pretty fucking criminal. (VC)

GIVE US BARABBAS "LUKE 23 18" CD ★★★★★

Ever Revisited Records: POB 1904 New Brunswick NJ 08901

It helps to know who is Barabbas, to get the meaning of this record. For those unsure, I suggest doing a little research on the subject. However, in short Barabbas was a man who took a stance against the Roman government and supposedly betrayed Jesus. His system of beliefs may have included basic Christian ideals, however it also incorporated certain freedoms that go against Christianity. These freedoms include taking a pro-choice stance on abortion and accepting homosexuality as opposed to condemning it. Many priests and evangelists believe modern society is a society that screams "Give Us Barabbas" instead of "Give Us Jesus." On "Luke 23 18," Give Us Barabbas melds old school Suicidal Tendencies and Black Flag with some modern day hardcore to give us a pretty good record. Focusing on the hypocrisy of modern Christianity and related evils through an effective use of sarcasm in the lyrics, Give Us Barabbas does not sound like a standard hardcore band

screaming "fuck this, fuck that." Altogether, this is a cool record and highly recommended.

DESIGN: MIKE CURRY ★★★★★

Unfold the insert and you'll find a great collage of pictures featuring the evils of the modern world: Jesus, Santa Claus, the KKK, George Bush Jr., the Pope, you get the idea. Inside the jewel case, you'll find the lyrics and some passages from the bible that feature the story of Barabbas. (DN)

GOOD RIDDANCE "SYMPTOMS OF A LEVELING SPIRIT" ★★

Fat Wreck Chords: POB 193690 San Francisco CA 94119 / www.fatwreck.com

A good solid punk rock album. The singer can sing, but not well enough to disqualify him from being punk. Catchy guitar hooks and bass lines. Palm-muted, power chord second guitar. Strong 1-2 drum beats. Vaguely revolutionary political lyrics, and even a song about being 16 years old. Top of the line punk rawking. These guys have been doing this for nearly twenty years now, they seem to have it nailed down. Nothing terribly new, but nothing dreadful.

DESIGN: ELI ATKINS ★★

From what I've seen the design looks pretty nice. Stencil font. Skeletons. Angels. Red, black, white, gray. Song titles placed at funny angles harkening back to the band's days of xeroxed fliers and CD booklets. Now the booklet is glossy and the odd lines and angled font are carefully considered and laid out. Once again, nothing new, but still it's a safe look. (WE)

GOOD RIDDANCE / KILL YOUR IDOLS "SPLIT EP" ★★

Jade Tree: 2310 Kenwyn Rd. Wilmington DE 19810 / jadetree.com

Jade Tree kicks off its new split EP series with two bands that sound like a slew of other bands that hail from California and New York. I'm a huge fan of almost everything Jade Tree puts out and this is the worst they have done in a long time. The split series is an awesome idea and Jade Tree has it's shit together enough to actually make it a series as opposed to a few split EP's. I just wish they invited better bands than Good Riddance and Kill Your Idols to kick it off. Good Riddance does its best NOFX impersonation ever on this split with four quick songs that is supposed to showcase their "harder edge." They start with a typical movie quote from a movie I can't remember that talks about selling out as the music kicks in. I guess they have a good "political message" and everything but the music is uninteresting and it takes away from anything the singer might have to say. The Kill Your Idols section is on par with the Good Riddance section in that it's average aggressive punk rock with a fast repetitive drum beat and unintelligible vocals. The songs run into each other and it's near impossible to tell where one song ends and the other begins. If you already like either of these bands then by all means pick this release up you will not be disappointed, but I recommend saving your money for the next few installments in this split EP series.

DESIGN No Stars

An artless promo CD in a paper sleeve. I've seen the cover and it has two white skulls with the band's names written in white underneath over a plain black background. (JA)

GRADE "HEADFIRST STRAIGHT TO HELL" ★★★★★

Victory Records: POB 146546 Chicago IL 60614

As the title itself implies, the newest by Grade continues to challenge the boundaries of musical genres that attempt to define and contain this band. The album art (not to jump completely into the Design part of the review) reinforces the incorporation of the metal genre into

this album. Grade generally does an excellent job melding slowed down speed metal to the mid/upbeat tempo of rock with an infusion of viscerally screamed and delicately sung vocals. The driving melodic nature of the metal-laden rock riffs somehow allows the sung and screamed dichotomous vocals to work. The newest influence that Grade attempts to incorporate in very subtle ways is some of the peripheral features of metal bands, such as synthesized background melodies and reverbed, distortionless intros and quiet parts that in one song resemble very closely the intro to the Metallica song "One." Lyrically, since I have no lyric sheet and cannot understand much of the vocals at all, I will have to draw conclusion by the song titles on the insert and what I remember from the lyrics in "Under the Radar." With the characteristic metal monster background, the lyrics tend to appear in support of the metal stereotype with such titles as "Bleeding Warm & Newly" and "The Glorious Dead." I have never enjoyed Grade's music for the lyrical content; mostly the lyrics have always seemed to contain stream-of-conscious over-intellectualized and not easily accessible metaphor. But the innovation is in the expressiveness of their distinct sense of aesthetics in both raw and constrained emotion, which they continue to explore.

DESIGN (cnt'd from Grade) ★★★

First of all, I have a promotional copy that appears in black and white and lacks any sort of liner notes that may accompany the actual release. Also included was a press sheet that gave little information about the band and its history, but suggested how one should interpret their album and the band's musical style. The album's cover showcases an image of a winged skull-headed woman whose raised arms control two puppeted figures, with infant bodies and dreadlocked skulls for heads which rest inside of the woman's spread legs. She is wearing a corset that reveals her star-tattooed and pierced nipples. I don't particularly find this genre of art pleasing, although I can appreciate the fact that this album artwork sets up a false impression of the album by playing with what is stereotypically metal in terms of packaging. (GL)

THE HAL AL SHEDAD ★★★

"SINGLES AND UNRELEASED RECORDINGS: 1995-1999" CD
The Buddy System: 302 Bedford Ave. 284 Brooklyn NY 11211 / thebuddysystem.com
Hal Al Shedad was a band from Atlanta that put out a slew of impressive singles, a pretty decent LP and then an interesting and ambitious prog-rock follow-up LP (both on the Buddy System) before disbanding. Many felt that the full-lengths, while good, never quite fulfilled the promise of the early seven inches. So now the singles have been collected as a CD, and it is good. Not as good as it seemed in 1996 (as happens with such projects), but pretty damn good. The sound, driving emo with epic arrangement and wailed singing, all of which sounded pretty futuristic back in those days, now seems somewhat dated, but less than many bands from the time period (that's why sounding futuristic is a good trick—it's like post dating a check). The vocals seem a bit 90's emo, but the music is solid and rocking. However: where is the instrumental trumpet and guitar song from the B side of the "Yesterdays Bullets" single? That song is totally the jam and it's not included! What gives?

DESIGN: BUDDY SYSTEM ★★★

See Arab on Radar design review. Not my personal thing, but it is slickly executed and fits the band well. Apparently those Owens brothers are reasonably proficient in the use of computers, or so people are constantly informing me in hushed and reverential whispers. (AB)

HEY MERCEDES "EVERYNIGHT FIRE WORKS" ★★★

Vagrant: 2118 Wilshire Blvd #361 Santa Monica CA 90403

Ever heard a band called Braid? Well, guess what, then you've heard Hey Mercedes. Hey Mercedes is ¾s of Braid, back from the dead and ready to rock again. After about a month of Braid's breakup, Bob Nanna, Damon Atkinson, and Todd Bell couldn't stomach the thought of having a real job, so they got together and started making music again. They recruited Mark Dawursk (Alligator Gun) to pick up the second axe, and they were all set to go. Where did they go? Well, after months of sparse but productive practicing and the release of an EP, they ventured into the legendary Pachyderm Studios with J. Robbins (Burning Airlines, Jawbox) at the controls. They recorded 11 songs in two weeks, and "Everynight Fire Works" was born. Angular and melodic, Hey Mercedes is quite a bit like Braid, but this should not be categorized as "just another Braid record." These guys have done their homework, studied their math, and learned a few things along the way. If anything, Hey Mercedes is a much more thought out and mature band than Braid ever was. All in all, this is some infectious, catchy, and harmonic punk/math/indie rock.

DESIGN ★★★

Cover artwork fits well with the music...two guys carrying folding chairs through a field...stars in the daylight sky. The same theme appears throughout, only progressed. Nice half moon images are found and repeated throughout. Nothing here is too fancy, but it works well with the music. (JRK)

HIMSA "DEATH IS INFINITE" ★

Revelation: POB 5232 Huntington Beach CA 92615 / revh3.com

Himsa's last full-length was an amazing blend of hardcore and metal that tons of other bands try to do but can't quite seem to pull off. But while on tour for that record, their singer quit in the middle of it and the band decided to go on without him and just play as an instrumental act. I heard they were still incredible, so I was excited to get this CD and hear what they were going to come up with next with a new singer. Much to my surprise, "Death is Infinite," is terrible. It has nothing from the previous full-length while the band has reduced themselves to a typical metallic hardcore band with a singer that is as big a tough-guy as the next who is credited with "screams & whispers." Such macho hardcore anthems as "Vengeance will be mine," "This is my fight for life," and "I refuse to submit" permeate this thankfully short EP. They even have an "electronics" player who is completely unnoticeable and pointless. I expected much more from this band and was wholeheartedly disappointed.

DESIGN ★

A typical hardcore/metal layout with scary imagery of death that was thrown together in what looks like five minutes in Photoshop. It just has lyrics and a thank you list along with a listing of the six people it took to make the music for this CD. Boring. (JA)

HOMESICK FOR SPACE "S/T" EP ★★★

Immigrant Sun Records: POB 150711 Brooklyn NY 11215

Homesick for Space, in spite of their stupid name, are a pretty decent band. They listen to a lot of Elliott Smith and Radiohead but they put their own spin on that sound that is pretty original with a lot of piano and swirling guitars along with solid drumming. The singer has a decent voice that can only get better. This isn't good enough for me to listen to repeatedly yet, but this is an EP that was recorded right after the band formed so

I think they'll just get better and come more into their own. I'd like to hear what they do next.

DESIGN ★★★

The cover is bland and ugly with a sunset on a field over a black background. But inside they use a clear wax-type paper to print the lyrics on and when you lay it flat against the black and red color blurs behind it, and the lyrics pop out more with the red bleeding through the wax paper. Very cool, I just wish the cover looked as cool as the inside. The concept is pretty simple but it comes together pretty well. (JA)

HUNDRED HANDS

Deep Elm Records: POB 36939 Charlotte NC 28236 / www.deeplm.com

A set of 6 songs ranging from delicate guitar work and reverby vocals to reverby guitar work and delicate vocals. The entire CD sounds like it was recorded at the bottom of the lake pictured on the cover: distant and muted. Some peppy drum machine work helps break up the tedium a little, but the layered guitar and the quiet sincere vocals soon kick in again to reassure the listener that things will not be getting crazy. A variety of delicate stringed instruments and keyboards help add texture, but the texture never varies from song to song. The lyrics are vague and talk about things decidedly "emo" (i.e., boys, trains, Sundays, hands etc.), but they seem sincere. College radio's answer to easy listening.

DESIGN: PATRICK GIROUX ★★★★★

The overall look of the booklet is involving. A muted purple, mountainous landscape with a moon, lake, and large ghostly hand spread out over the two pages. The painting is delicate and pretty, like the band, but it is a lot more interesting. The lyrics are clear, and easy to read. The word side of the booklet is very clear and functional while maintaining the theme of dull muted colors. (WE)

THE IMPOSSIBLES "BRICK BOMB" CDEP ★★★

Fueled By Ramen: POB 12563 Gainesville FL 32604 / fueledbyramen.com

Sounds like Weezer. Have you heard the new Weezer, by the way? Not that good. Technically, this is better Weezer than the new Weezer. But so then is it really better or is a sterling imitation inherently worse (by virtue of its imitativeness) than the original, even if that original begins to become a pale imitation of itself? What a conundrum!

DESIGN ★★★

Simple, cool layout with punched out letters reading "impossible." The punched out letters make it neat. (AB)

IN DYING DAYS "LIFE AS A BALANCING ACT" ★★★★★

One Day Savior Recordings: POB 372 Williston Park NY 11596

To generalize, the entire metal-hardcore genre is heavily flooded with technical brats more inclined to read Guitar World rather than something like MediaReader. Very few bands seem to highlight their hardcore roots and it could be that contemporaries are taking more influence from Earth Crisis rather than Econochrist. In Dying Days try to fight their way through this quagmire and—if this release says anything—seem to be denting a pretty nice sized space for themselves. While still in the technical genre, it's straight forward. It's anthemic and the passion is still there. The lyrics are well-thought out and take on issues like the narrow-mindedness of violence instead of trite macabre poetry about demons and wizards. A singing element on a few of the tracks is very similar to Grade's old sound—except In Dying Days plays with the urgency and energy that's refreshing in a time where hot guitar solos prevail over thought-provoking content.

DESIGN ★★

Photoshop filters in a messy collage mixed with a Eurostile-like typeface? I know it's tried and true, but it gets boring to look at. In general, the layout seems forced to play into various cultural codes our demographic demands. The cover typography style is similar to some of the work Jacob Bannon did with his own band, but his is much more natural. Various abstract and geometric line art shapes permeate youth countercultures like roaches. The mosaic filter gives it that "dirty" look. It's not terrible, but it doesn't tell me anything and instead just tries to emulate an aesthetic that's been mimicked and mocked. (VC)

INSIDE FIVE MINUTES: "STATELY CHAOS HOME" ★★

Makoto Records

I'm sure this band would hate the comparison, but I just couldn't get the thought out of my head: this just sounds like a super low-budget Tool. From the guy's voice down to the busy drums, I can see the puppet men with the vibrating arms in their videos as I listen to it. Makoto Records puts out quite the array of different sounding bands and I'm sure they were just trying to broaden the "kids" horizons with this one, but it just doesn't do it for me. The playing is competent and there are some interesting parts instrument-wise (song six has an acoustic bongo freak-out in the middle of it) but it's just not the "rock" the press-sheet promised (it compared them to past Detroit rockers the Mc5) nor does this live up to the standards of the label's past.

DESIGN ★★★

The whole package of this looks a lot better than the band sounds. A great use of orange on black permeates the entire layout and the cover picture is a really unique picture of the singer and crowd. The inside has all of the lyrics printed and some interesting "band rocking" photos. It all looks very nice and I wish I could give credit to whoever put it together since they were not credited in the booklet. (AM)

INSPECTION 12 "IN RECOVER" CD ★

Honest Don's: POB 192027 SF CA 94119 / honestdons.com

Four guys around 20 years old, raised on MTV2 and pop punk, growing up in Jacksonville, FL. They do the formula: melodic, tight pop from "alternative" youth. I prefer to call it bad music from people who watch too much TV and have poor taste. They've got the formula to be MTV, but then again, these bands are a dime a dozen.

DESIGN: MAX MICHAELS ★

The idea with the title and contents of this CD is a parody (keep in mind that these kids aren't of age to drink yet, at least according to their one sheet) of AA recovery. So included are their disgusting skews of the 12 steps for AA, rephrased to be "witty" and incorporate their agenda for taking over the world. Sound like a suburban kid's idea of a funny joke? If I were the designer, I would have refused to assemble this package of teenage arrogance. (DL)

JAZZ JUNE "THE BOOM, THE MOTION, THE MUSIC" ★★

Initial Records

There was a time in the late nineties when it looked like Initial Records was going to be the new "powerhouse" indie label that would just continue to gobble up the good bands as they came along. They had Boysetsfire (in their heyday), The Enkindels (also in their heyday) anything by Scott Vogel (also in his...ah well you get the picture) but the past couple of years they've sort of disappeared and/or have had no bands to put out, as they all left for other (not necessarily greener) pastures. Well, it seems as though re-releasing a mediocre Jazz June record is their only option these days, and that's not a very good

option for anyone. I would understand re-releasing records that people are clamoring for, or perhaps paying ridiculous amounts of money for on Internet auctions, but I don't think I've ever heard anyone lamenting the long-gone possibility of finding that one *Jazz June* record. Well, don't ask and ye' shall receive! Jazz June are a decent yet hardly memorable indie/emo-pop band with decent tempo changes; but do nothing warranting anything but marginal praise.

DESIGN ★★

This record looks right at home on Initial records. A three-color design job cut up into the appropriate segments with band pictures and a cool looking font. This is very reminiscent of past Doghouse releases or maybe early Promise Ring records. It looks really nice, just not really original. (AM)

JERSEY "DEFINITION" CDEP ★★

Fueled By Ramen: POB 12563 Gainesville FL 32604 / fueledbyramen.com

This is pretty good, Avail-ish upbeat rawk that could be a big hit with the kids and could just as conceivably fall between the cracks and into forgotten anonymity. How does it work in the emo-core circuit? Unlike the blues or heavy metal, I doubt sale of eternal soul to the devil is the operative factor in weeding the successful from the die-in-obscurity crowd. What is it that makes one band of this genre huge and the other billion exactly as competent, exactly as sincere, exactly as crowd-pleasing/formulaic bands fail? If Jersey knows the answer, they'll be the next big thing; if not their legacy will be one more stack of aluminum discs cluttering our landfills in a few years.

DESIGN ★

As evidenced by the above review, I'm no witch-doctor nor conduit to the benevolent indie-rock Gods, but I will offer you people some basic advice on how to manage your rock career: step one, get a better graphic designer. This CD looks god-awful. I mean, it's just as if every possible offense to my sensibilities has been committed here. And not in a good way. (AB)

JILL BRAZIL "THE SONGS OF JILL BRAZIL" CD ★★

Pool or Pond: POB 2084 Bellingham WA 98227

When I was a kid, I loved to ride my bike down steep hills. Every now and then I'd totally eat it and roll through the dirt for what seemed to be miles. This CD is the soundtrack to contently rolling across a dirt plateau, reveling in anxiety and fear—but with a bull chasing you. Jill Brazil is a mostly instrumental, math-jazz-art four-piece from Bellingham. Not usually digging music of this description, especially if it has wild sax blaring, this disc took me for a change of heart. What Jill Brazil has that most bands of the genre do not is the ability to go crazy while still rocking and presenting highly listenable songs. Everything is turned up to ten. The production is great and still raw enough to let their intensity shine through. The last few tracks feature vocals that are almost Suicidal Tendencies but somehow fit, using the busyness of the music as a Minutemen-type groundwork for ST vocals. This is chaos-core, get acquainted with the term!

DESIGN ★★

Hand drawn, lettered, everything. No computers here. Very cool, almost old-timey. No lyrics and it comes in a CD-single type packaging. I wish it were in a jewel case so I could see it on the CD shelf. (DL)

JOAN OF ARC ★★

"HOW CAN ANY THING SO LITTLE BE ANY MORE?" CD

Jade Tree: 2310 Kennaynn Rd. Wilmington DE 19810 / jadetree.com

Eight tracks of Kinsellian concept rock. Four pretty acoustic songs. Some scary astronaut noises. Some

really frightening kids singing dirty songs and reflecting on how it feels to be a winner versus how it feels to be a poor loser (not that good, apparently). One reference to Mr. T. Overall, enough beautiful, delicate parts to offset the creepy kids and the spacerock.

DESIGN

Jade Tree decided not to send out a sleeve or liner notes with the promo copy. Or maybe that's just minimalism. Stars: NA. (WE)

JOHN BROWN BATTERY "IS JINKED" CD ★★

Hewhocorruptsinc: 196 Fairfield Elmhurst IL 60126

This band would set well on a bill with Small Brown Bike and Hot Water Music. Thick and melodic music that changes up enough to keep rocking and show more sides than having the amps on ten all the time. When it roars it's blistering, then they tone it down a bit with prettier clean parts. The singer sounds like he's in pain, coughing up guttural syllables as if his life depends on you hearing them. Actually sounds a lot like HWM but a rawer, house show type version of the band. It would probably be a fun show to see.

DESIGN ★★

Skulls are back in, you should know that by now. So this is another cover with an x-ray skull-type graphic. Simple black and gray. I hate it how the image clips on the right side, as if they wanted it to expand the entire cover but the graphic had limitations. There had to be some way around this. Nonetheless, a pretty nice package. The font is a bit too "horrorshow" for my taste, but it makes it look a bit crusty as if Great American Steak Religion released it. (DL)

JUDAH JOHNSON "S/T" CD ★

Flameshovel Records: flameshovel.com

I'm in no position to expose the intricacies of this music. Shoe-gazer indie rock that moves me in no way. Occasionally lapses into a Radiohead-esque moment that falls very short of passable. I pass.

DESIGN—No Stars

Really terrible packaging. Looks like a Rorschach test ink blob on the cover, then you open up the gatefold on the booklet to expose a horrible photo of the beach. No photo or design merit is present. It's as if they didn't even care about the packaging of this CD. (DL)

THE JULIANA THEORY ★★

"MUSIC FROM ANOTHER ROOM"

Tooth and Nail: POB 12698 Seattle WA 98111

The Juliana Theory perplexes me, I must admit. They can't seem to make up their mind about just exactly what kind of band they are or want to be. I didn't say this was by any means a bad thing. This record is perhaps the band's most diverse release, which is in fact explained. You see, these songs were not intended to go together as one record. However, I think that for as diverse as the record is, the songs do fit together quite nicely. On "Music From Another Room," The Juliana Theory takes you from swirling space rock to brooding folk melodies, touching down near piano ballads and straight up rock along the way. The opening track, "This is the End of Your Life," is a dreamy rock tune which will bring you closer to outer space. Next comes "Moments..." which is, you guessed it, a lush ballad type song. Yeah, it's a bit sappy, but it is close enough to the edge where it doesn't qualify as "adult contemporary." The closing track, aptly entitled "Piano Song," is a quiet piano-clad affair, sure to make your knees buckle. The band utilizes a wide

array of instruments, from layers of guitars (three, in fact) to keyboards, allowing themselves to operate completely unfettered... They simply create, and let the chips fall where they may. The Juliana Theory is sure to please fans of Idaho, The Czars, Queen, Alice in Chains, and Elton John (I told you this was diverse!).

DESIGN ★★

This has a very simple but ingenious design. The cover features an x-ray of some headphones with the album title in the bottom corner...here is the hook...turn it over to the back cover and what you get is the front cover in reverse. The same theme is repeated inside, with the lyrics and info section. It sounds lame as I am reading what I have just written, but trust me, it's cool. (JRK)

KAITO ★★

"YOU'VE SEEN US ...YOU MUST HAVE SEEN US" CD

Devil in the Woods: POB 579168 Modesto CA 95357 / devilinthewoods.com

Pretty alright, moderate pop. The vocals are all pretty cute and the lyrics come out sounding pretty intelligent when they are intelligible. Lots of catchy guitar hooks and dancey rhythms. On every song they use some sort of laser-raygun sounding effects. The upside is that all the songs are upbeat, catchy, and involve some kind of crazy guitar noises. The downside is that all the songs are upbeat, catchy, and involve some kind of crazy guitar noises.

DESIGN: NIKKI KAITO, DAVE LAKE ★★

Simple blue cover with a digitally distorted photograph made to look like a pencil and paint drawing. Some generic prefabricated lens flares. The picture of the camera in the tray doesn't make any sense and doesn't fit at all. The overall look isn't unappealing but it would look a lot better if it had been done away from a computer. (WE)

KEVIN DEVINE "CIRCLE GETS THE SQUARE" ★★

Immigrant Sun Records: POB 150711 Brooklyn NY 11215

Standard singer/songwriter material that is being churned out by the "hurt little white-boy" factory. I guess this wouldn't be so bad if there wasn't such an abundance of this sort of sap. Personally, with everything that goes on in the world, I can't find myself caring about the sensitive boy that can't get the girl or hurts the girl or doesn't understand the girl or himself. At least don't whine about it quietly, shout, man! Rock! All right, I get it, this is much more personal and intimate. I know some people really get into this stuff but I just can't.

DESIGN: S. MALLINSON, PAT KNIGHT, KEVIN DEVINE ★★

A simple and minimal package works well with the musical contents. A few pictures of Devine himself and the lyrics. Anything more would have been too much. (DN)

KILL CREEK "COLORS OF HOME" ★★

Second Nature: POB 11543 Kansas City MO 64138

While this band is from my hometown, I'll try and not let my hometown pride get in the way of this review. Seriously, though, Kill Creek have been around Lawrence, KS since forever and this release showcases all of their maturity that comes along with such tenure. "Colors of Home" is their third full length after a first EP from years back, and this is the best since that first release. Kill Creek is a solid rock band that still happens to be "indie." They don't really fit into an emo/indie genre nor are they boring radio rock either. Simply put this is a record made by competent, hard working musicians and it's great to see a label with such a lauded reputation as

Second Nature putting it out. The vocals, a strained singing that occasionally flirts with screaming are backed by adventurous, yet restrained guitar work and drumming. It is this subtle tension by both the instruments and vocals that give Kill Creek their power and holds my attention and has held for years the attention of the scene that I call my home.

DESIGN: SEAN INGRAM ★★

The multi-color, multi-fold apart action of this booklet is really damn impressive. Every Second Nature release looks really decent, but every third one or so really gets the star treatment. This usually entails some intricate folding, beautiful picture taking, or some outer cover over the real cover (the Coalesce "functioning..." record) that just blows everyone away, the layout of "Colors of Home" is one of the lucky ones. Lots of intricate folding of the booklet pages (yet this never gets in the way) reveals interesting artwork and all of the legible lyrics. Great to look at and efficient work done by Sean and Dan! (AM)

KILL SADIE "EXPERIMENTS IN EXPECTATION" CD ★★

Dim Mak: POB 14041 Santa Barbara CA 93107

Kill Sadie returns with their UOA-style assault for what will be their last release. Yes, this band is now defunct, but this isn't a retrospective, this was and is intended to be their last LP. This band has pounding drumming, intricate guitar work, moody bass, and screaming. Sounds like an emo formula, and it is to a degree, but they do it well. They have a lot of spacey jams interspersed on this record that pop their heads out of the maddening bulk of the record, only to go back under water to let the storm surge. The guitar work on this record is very impressive. Super high dissonant dueling while the rhythm section pounds. If you're interested in what emo was before bands like the Get Up Kids destroyed it, you should get this record. Sleepytime Trio-style, DC-core, good rock.

DESIGN ★

It's a digipack. Not a glamorously nice one, just a digipack. The picture cuts at a weird place on the cover and I don't understand why they didn't just fill the cover with the photo. Maybe the cover image isn't strong enough to be a cover image? I don't like the photo at all: a storm rolling in over telephone boxes. It's not very creative from a photography standpoint, just a normal snapshot. The font or handwriting is completely illegible, so another strike. Another dark and blurry photo of them on the inside and some lyrics to accompany. I'm left wanting more. The music is much better than the cover... (DL)

THE LACK "THE LACK" CD ★★

Troubleman Unlimited: 16 Willow St. Bayonne NJ 07002 / troublemanunlimited.com

This is smoking electronic music made by smart hardcore kids. Two drummers, drum machines and crazy noises that fall together in a coherent package. It's what you wanted the last Nine Inch Nails album to be. If this band can pull this off live they will blow away any other band they play with. Powerful and aggressive electronica, but not what you'd expect. There's room enough here for the electro-junkie to find happiness and the punk kid to have his or her mind blown. I don't want to spoil it for you; you should try this one out. A solid record; a superb Troubleman release.

DESIGN ★★

A series of bluish transparencies that overlay each other. Nice and distinctive. The lyrics come as part of an enhanced CD, so you better have a computer if you want to find the words. Sleepytime Trio did this

years ago with a 7" release and since then many bands have copied them (Bluetip, Blue Ontario), but this is the best reinterpretation of the packaging. Nice job. (DL)

THE LADDERBACK ★★ ★★

"INTRODUCTIONS TO DEPARTURE" CD

Bifocal Media: POB 50106 Raleigh NC 27650

Rockin' mathy hardcore from my hometown. They lyrics and the music can be a little to mathy and emotionally lacking at times, but the insanity of the stops and the illogical guitar lines make up for it. 53 seconds short of a half hour of non-stop rock. The vocals switch back and forth between a forced scream (which can get tiring after a while) and melodic singing from out of nowhere, but mostly the forced scream all the way through. A nice soundclip of a teary phone conversation for emotional depth. The guitarist "J" isn't afraid to use the clean channel when rocking out. Sometimes this comes off as funny, but usually it adds a nice tone behind all the distortion. Definately a big step up on their second try at a full length with much more cohesion and style throughout the album.

DESIGN ★★ ★★ ★

This is probably the nicest-looking CD I've seen in a long while. Pretty textured red paper with strong black xerox art. For some reason calipers are the theme for this outing. Probably has something to do with all the math involved in the music and the lyrics. The CD tray has a bewildering picture of rain falling from a black sky, black and white of course, and the back of is a nice and blurry color picture of the band rocking out with some sort of effect that makes it look as if it were an old television set. The color scheme may be trendy but man oh man does it look good! Design school pays off! (WE)

LIGHTHEAVYWEIGHT "ISN'T IT PRETTY TO THINK SO?" ★★ ★

Your Best Guess: POB 64 Denville NJ 07834

It's very strange how prevalent the organ is in the indie rock scene these days. There is a whole movement it seems, spearheaded by the likes of Beulah, Of Montreal, The Apples In Stereo, etc... that just won't quit until it has every former hardcore kid buying Elton John records and wearing "mod" suits. Is this the new ska?! Well, maybe its not that bad...really, though Lightheavyweight would be right at home on Elephant Six or even the Gern Blandsten of late. This lies in the middle of the Impossible Five LP that was put out on Gern a few years back and early U2. The singer is almost a dead ringer for Bono at times. And while all of this is pleasant to listen to, even my mother would think it's a bit hokey and probably would make fun of me if I put it on in the car while she was driving, and never mind what my roommates would say if they heard me playing this! I'll just stick to getting made fun of for listening to Brian Eno and the Flying Lizards.

DESIGN ★

The lengths this record goes to be unimaginative are astounding! I don't know whose bright idea it was to take two pictures of some vapid looking dolls in bad sweaters and put them on the front and back covers of the CD, but they couldn't have spent more than two minutes on the toilet thinking it up. I realize the parallels of that criticism with the infamous (lame) joke of "who are the ad wizards who came up with that one" but it just had to be said. On the inside are two blank pages, which at least have the lyrics printed on them. (AM)

LOVESICK "S/T" ★★ ★

Makato Recordings: POB 50403 Kalamazoo Mi 49005

If it seems to you that a lot of non-commercial rock of late has a sound of frantic urgency, you are right. Lovesick is

no exception, the frantic mania and passionate lyrics, the grinding guitars all seem to come together to create something that is not so sure of itself independently. However, when compared to all its contemporaries, it has a place at the table alongside Casket Lottery, Small Brown Bike, Sweep the Leg Johnny, Hot Water Music, Ted Leo and many others. After a couple of sought after vinyl releases, this Michigan group presents us with a full length self-titled album. I found the pacing of the album to be quite good, as they spread themselves out evenly, spacing frantic guitar rants with emotional vocals. I especially liked "to the dead," filled with steady rock, the lyrics of this and for that matter most of the songs stand on their own as relatively decent prose. "Crown" sparkles in punk rock glory, whereas "Calm for the Hits" has trace elements of the draining guitars of Cursive. It is probably easy to sit and listen to Lovesick and compare them with about thirty other bands. They bring together all of the elements so well that I am curious to see what comes of these kids, and also what will come next from Makoto.

DESIGN: IDA PEARLE ★★ ★

At first glance I thought that this might be another release from IDA, as the cover art reminded me so much of that for their album "Braille Night." It wasn't, but Ida Pearle from IDA created the simple collage of a girl flying her kite against a gentle autumn sky. Not exactly hardcore, but imaginative and dreamy. Aesthetically pleasing—yes; sweaty and panicked—no. Nonetheless an eyecatcher. (SB)

MARY TYLER MORPHINE/MUNITION "SPLIT CD" ★★

Failed Experiment: 54205 Bishop St. Chicago IL 60609

MTM are a female trio with talk/singy vocals (and the occasional "Freddy Krueger" scream that comes out of nowhere) and pretty straightforward rock/hardcore music to back it up. They are probably the better of the two bands on the split, nothing astounding but fairly solid. Munition gets a worse recording job on this than on their full-length (reviewed elsewhere) but it seems to serve them better. They don't sound as "radio rock" but they still just sound like mediocre early nineties hardcore. As with the other Munition record this is a benefit. This time for the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, so if you have a few extra bucks and you see this at the record store give that a thought if you are considering buying it.

DESIGN ★★

This is a pretty boring layout for a fairly unexceptional record. It's funny how 90% of the time one begets the other. The cover and back both look like pictures taken with night vision goggles. They are all green and black like in the army movies when the bad guys are looking for the hero in the woods at night...uh...anyway, nothing special, but at least the inside has information on the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, in case you want to read up about the organization. (AM)

THE MIRACLE OF '86 "S/T" CD ★★ ★★

Immigrant Sun: POB 150711 Brooklyn NY 11215

This is a re-release of MO86's first (and only?) full-length. This band is from NYC and plays rock along the lines of (and I'm going to throw out some crazy comparison points here) Dag Nasty, Jimmy Eat World, Sunny Day Real Estate and Quicksand. Raw, stripped down guitars are countered by smooth and precise vocals that do (and most thankfully do) break into a full scream at certain points. There's quite of bit of religious reference points in the lyrics, but it's abstract enough for me not to understand the affiliation; and thus, they are not offensive. This is a good pop/rock record that keeps the mix much

rawer than your average smooth-everything-over studio project bands that have attacked America. The Miracle of '86 keep the mix changing and adapt to the rage or tranquility that they express within the songs on this record. I look forward to hearing more from them.

DESIGN ★★ ★

Cover is a cool live shot of them playing outside. The inside is loaded with more live shots which, quantity-wise, get to be a bit too much. I wish they would have showcased only the great ones. I always think it's weird to have a clear jewel case with no printing on the back side of the tray card. Still though, a nice package. (DL)

MINUS "JESUS CHRIST BOBBY" CD ★★

Victory Records: Chicago / victoryrecords.com

More over-produced hardcore from Victory Records. The vocals are constantly "in the red" for a more "extreme" sound. Whenever the vocals are clean it's either the boy's harmonizing Deftones style or copping bad British accents. Generic and tiring metal guitars. The detuned bass that really captures that "diesel" bass sound. There are some pretty nifty sounds and electronic noises added in that keep this from being totally generic. Aside from the crazy little bleeps and synthesized wind noises there are stops, starts, and an acoustic ballad about the boys' arctic home that misses its target.

DESIGN: GUNNAR BOR VILAJALMASON ★

This booklet is almost like a joke. Like the artist with the blank sheet of paper claiming it's a polar bear eating ice-cream in a blizzard. Instead of a polar bear it's albino people, undernourished and hairless, and instead of a blizzard it's a nondescript and out of focus white background. All this and all the lyrics are scribbled in what looks to be crayon in an attempt to seem genuinely "kah-raaazy." Yeah, this booklet is almost like a joke. (WE)

MUNITION "THE BLACK WAVE" ★★

Failed Experiment: 5420 S. Bishop St. Chicago IL 60609

Imagine that its 1993 again and Endpoint are really huge in Louisville and about to break out into the mainstream. Instead of breaking up they don't and are then corrupted by the evil corporate powers that be. Flash forward in this hypothetical universe to the late nineties when Third Eye Blind are rocking out on every "alternative" station in the country. Well, in this alternate universe, T.E.B. are Endpoint with their band-name changed, and if you still follow me, this is exactly what Munition sound like. This is a really bad Endpoint with Third Eye Blind genetically fused to Duncan Barlow's spine. Coincidentally, much like Endpoint, Munition seem to at least be socially conscious as proceeds from the record benefit an organization known as P.L.A.Y. an art program for youth charity, which is commendable.

DESIGN ★

The font for this record must be called "my black ink pen just broke all over the damn place" font. The front cover, back cover and entire six page booklet are all done with the leaky pen drops everywhere and the same two boring colors possibly to simulate the "Black Wave," whatever that means. (AM)

MUTELINGO "S/T" CD ★★ ★

Modular records (1st release)

This is yet another neo-instrumental band-prog-rock outfit. Just when I was sure the world didn't need another one, Mutelingo actually do a few things differently enough that I'm not actually upset they got to record an album. They end up coming off as a sort of Rush/Blue Oyster Cult style band, sort of '70's instrumental

freak-outs for indie rockers. They do get points for not sounding like a fifth rate Tristeza/Roots of Orchis...etc... This is full of competent musicianship; it just didn't hold my interest for its entire seven songs. I'll take my King Crimson with the words about wizards and grandiose medieval imagery, thank you.

DESIGN : ★ but maybe ★★ ★★

This came in one of those "futuristic" plastic CD-shaped holders that are the new-promo-model. Yet, they did a few things that make it look like this is the legitimate layout for the album itself. It came with a single strip of real film negative with pictures of the band members and the info about the album printed on the plastic. So, maybe if this simplistic design compliments the band so well they are deserving of a "four star" rating. (AM)

MXPX "THE RENAISSANCE EP" ★★ ★

Fat Wreck Chords: POB 193690 San Francisco CA 94119-3690

MXPX are pretty prolific by now in the pop punk genre of music now. I haven't really paid much attention to them since "Teenage Politics" on Tooth and Nail. For some reason they have dodged the spotlight bands like Blink 182 hold on MTV, perhaps since they have or had the religious stigma attached to their music, which they seemed to have disavowed completely on this release. Musically, it conforms to their previous releases and the pop-punk genre although they seem to be following a formula similar to that of Descendents records: mostly medium paced melodic pop punk with a couple dissonant faster, more hardcore-influenced songs interspersed. The lyrics are centered around platitudes on teenage nostalgia, parties and...relationships. Yawn.

DESIGN: JOHN REID, MICHELE HERRERA, AND MIKE ★

There exist four major elements to the design: a black skull graphic, a predominantly red background and the MXPX logo in a rubber-stamp typeface and an old typewriter typeface. This could have been done in Photoshop in less half an hour. I think of other bands that are more successful with high contrast artwork like Strike Anywhere's "Change is a Sound" album, and comparably, I guess I could say that MXPX's artwork corresponds as closely with the sound as Strike Anywhere's art does with their sound. Strike Anywhere challenges a fairly stereotypical design by adopting it to communicate their message. MXPX's design communicates their message too, I suppose, but it's just pretty stereotypical. If you like them still, you'll probably be pretty stoked with this new 8 song EP. (GL)

NEW END ORIGINAL "THRILLER" CD ★★ ★★

Jade Tree: 2310 Kennwynn Rd. Wilmington DE 19810 / jadetree.com

The cast list of this band is impressive, combining the talents of Far, Onlinedrawing, Texas is the Reason, Shelter etc., etc. It is *New* (debut album) *End* (lets hope not) and *Original*...okay that is debatable. New End makes strong parallels to Jonah's Onlinedrawing, as crossover will undoubtedly be apparent when one finds themselves quartering their talents into three plus bands. Vagrant and Jade Tree seem to be doing a good job these days of carrying the anthemic pop stars of the times. New End Original is no exception, as they capture a sound of modern familiarity. Proper respect given, I am too lazy to list all the other bands they sound like, so it is up to you, the reader, to make your own charts of comparisons. "Lukewarm" has a gentle sense of humor as a manifesto of independence against "a house in the burbs and an SUV...I'll never end up." Not exactly prophetic, as I am sure at almost any rock show you would find six in ten who agree with this proclamation. 14-41 has similar utterances of youth, "my birthday is my worst day, 14-41

start life and always end up done.” Simply put, they found no better rock tonic than a dose of healthy youthful rebellion. “Leper Song” captures tender vocal stylings comparable to Thom Yorke on any Radiohead album. “Titanic” contains strong builds and catchy hooks that give it repeatable listenability much like the rest of the album. New End doesn’t exactly pave new roads of anthemic pop, yet as far as angst emo is concerned, they do it well. Lyrically this album can be a bit of a temper tantrum as it kicks and screams and ultimately winds up feeling frustrated and misunderstood. As a whole “Thriller” proves catchy and provides a bit of big brother wisdom from a quartet giving proper respect to their combined talents and influences.

DESIGN ★★★★★

Simple city scapes make up the liner notes that look like a series of Wayne Thiebaud's paintings depicting the landscape of San Francisco. Can we give this guy a solo show?

NO USE FOR A NAME “LIVE IN A DIVE” CD ★★★★★

Fat Wreck Chords: POB 193690, SF, CA 94119

This isn’t a normal live CD. NUFAN play their usual brand of So-Cal punk à la Bad Religion in a live context, but a ton of work went into this release. It comes with a full comic book drawn by Rick Renender that features NUFAN in all their comic book glory. Above and beyond this, the CD in enhanced and contains VERY well done live footage and interviews of and with the band. This is really cool, and super impressive. They have managed to transform the format of the CD into something much bigger and interesting. It will take you hours to get through all the info in here. A very impressive release. This band has been around forever, but if you don’t own any of their records, this would be a good starting point. I can’t believe I just said that about a live record.

DESIGN ★★★★★

Refer to the above review for contents of design. Comic book is worth 4 stars alone. This is very well done. (DL)

NOW IT'S OVERHEAD “S/T” CD ★★★

Saddle Creek: POB 8554 Omaha NB 68108 / saddle-creek.com

The second Athens band reviewed in this issue, Now It’s Overhead shares half its members with their fellow townies Azure Ray. Similar feel to Azure Ray, slow vocally-driven texture-based songs. This album is more complex and denser than the Azure Ray disc. Layers on layers of sounds here. The best songs are the more stripped down ones that feel less contained and raw. Track 4 is the stand-out, more upbeat with a catchy rhythm on the downbeat, almost Clash-sounding at times, while reminiscent of the Beatles at others. This is slow mood music that probably won’t make your adrenaline pump, but it may be that perfect disc for whatever you do at night.

DESIGN ★★★★★

Very cool paintings on a matte stock paper. Earth tones, water, elegant introspection. Fits perfectly with the music. Minimalist and moody. Lyrics are unfortunately impossible to read. If it weren't for the lyrics and the name being too large on the spine of the jewel case, this thing would have gotten five stars on painting merit alone. (DL)

OWEN “S/T” CD ★★★★★

Polyvinyl: POB 1885 Danville IL 61834 / polyvinylrecords.com

Of course the one-sheet to this record was lost, and the Polyvinyl website wasn’t working when I went to it, and

there is no list of members in the packaging. I may be wrong on this one, but I believe that this is Mike Kinsella’s solo project. Remember Mike Kinsella from Cap’n Jazz, Joan of Arc, Ghosts and Vodka and most recently Owls? Yes, he’s one of the best drummers playing live today. Well, I’ll finish the review as if this is his solo project. Owen is an introspective album. Soft music, hushed vocals, and tight guitar work—both acoustic and electric. The backwards cymbals and drum effects are subtle and great. A lot of work went into this album and whether or not there was a full band in accompaniment is a non-issue, the record is quiet and whispers as if it were huge. There is some arrangement going on that is Owen, Caith, and Kyle (the two Rainer Maria frontstars), I don’t know about this and have a hard time deciphering the “Owen” part. If this band is truly just Mike Kinsella, why didn’t he call it “Kinsella,” instead of someone else’s name? Truly confusing, but truly great.

DESIGN: CHRIS STRONG ★★★★★

Four amazing photos and a perfect font. Props to Chris for such strong photos. Minimalistic and introspective. I only ask that next time the lyrics go in. (DL)

THE PANOPLY ACADEMY OF LEGIONNAIRES ★★★★★

“NO DEAD TIME” CD

Secretly Canadian: 1703 N. Maple Bloomington IN 47404

Panoply return with their extremely angular Sonic Youth meets Nation of Ulysses style songwriting. High pitched dissonant guitar leads, midrange bass, simplistic yet satisfying drumming. Lots of crescendos and drop-offs. It plays bumper cars with your mind. It gets you going, then rams you and someone pulls you out of the car to yell at you for hitting someone else. Oddly confusing but it makes sense and you keep getting back in for another ride because it’s pretty damn fun.

DESIGN ★★

A sketchy lithograph type cover that doesn't do much for me, but doesn't look bad either. I could go either way on this one. (DL)

PARKER AND LILY “HELLO HALO” ★★★★★

Orange Recordings: orangerecordings.com

So, you’re watching a David Lynch movie and the scene were the creepy midget who talks backwards starts making out with the lady with a prosthetic leg attached to her head comes on, this is the music that begins when their lips meet. Parker and Lily (formerly known as Valentine Six) are a male/female duo resembling a creepier version of the Black Heart Procession and Julie Cruise from the Twin Peaks soundtracks. The duo (also joined by a drummer and slide guitarist) employs a myriad of interesting instruments to create somber, haunting, and beautiful music that creeps you out and lulls you to sleep at the same time.

DESIGN ★★

Although the stark layout accompanies the bleak music, it could be so much better. At least with the Black Heart Procession you get two unique looking individuals in suits and cowboy hats on the inside. The Parker and Lily CD is instead graced with a few stills of the band playing and a supermodel-looking woman holding an umbrella in the forefront of a blanket of whiteness for the cover. Don't judge this album from that initial impression, as you will miss out on eleven songs of beauty and sadness. (AM)

PEDRO THE LION ★★★★★

“IT’S HARD TO FIND A FRIEND”

“THE ONLY REASON I FEEL SECURE” CD

Jade Tree: 2310 Kennwynn Rd. Wilmington DE 19810 / jadetree.com

These two records are both re-releases of Pedro the Lion’s earlier work. “It’s Hard to Find a Friend” was the first record originally released in 1998 on the Made In Mexico label. “The Only Reason I Feel Secure” was the 1999 follow-up EP also released on the Made in Mexico label. David Bazan’s lyrics have had some critics hailing him as a genius, and while I believe that is a bit of an overstatement, one thing is for sure: the guy has heart. Quiet, somber, emotional tales are accompanied with a minimalist usage of acoustic guitar, snare drum and bass. You have to be in the right mood to appreciate the music. If you’re going to listen to the band for the first time and you’re in the mood to rock out, wait until you’re depressed and lonely and allow Pedro the Lion to sit next to you and help perpetuate your sadness. In a way, this is comfort music. Occasionally, the licks sound a little snappier but that doesn’t seem to last long. Both records serve as music for a rainy day or a long drive through the middle of nowhere.

DESIGN

No Artwork was provided, promo sleeve. (DN)

PENFOLD “OUR FIRST TASTE OF ESCAPE” ★★★★★

Milligram Records: POB 174 Wickatunk NJ 07765

As the accessible emo-gone-pop-punk genre becomes more mainstream (in the week of this writing, Saves the Day and Jimmy Eat World both appeared on separate nationally broadcasted late night talk shows), more and more of the newer fans will probably forego the roots and pattern their influences towards a level as shallow as Saves the Day. Such fans might then consider Penfold “old school” sounding because they take much more from Sunny Day Real Estate than The Get Up Kids. I hope that’s not the case, but have a feeling it might. Hailing from New Jersey, this is the second album after a previous one and two 7”s. Penfold play the style well and the writing is strong, but refreshing this is not. I feel like I’ve heard these riffs before on some album somewhere two years ago. When they start to push the envelope of their peers, maybe I’ll start to pay attention.

DESIGN ★★★★★

Unusual cuts always make for an interesting layout. The liner notes booklet has a separate overlap that's cut in the middle. The overlap itself has photographs that depict an intersection in motion and on the inside a picture of birds circling — probably looking for targets to shit on. There's a nice sense of type and the bleedless margins fall into the trendy modernist aesthetic that so many midwestern indie/emo bands tend to lean towards. It looks like the overlap is printed on an inkjet printer. Whether or not this is because of intention or budget limitations, it's a nice touch, adding a softer feel to the photography. The insert in the booklet is just a natural-colored stock with the lyrics handwritten among random photos for a small journal type of look. It most definitely adds in the “emo” points. Despite being only aesthetic-based with no strong concept, it's well done and well executed. (VC)

PLANESMISTAKENFORSTARS “FUCK WITH FIRE” CD ★

No Idea: POB 14636 Gainesville Florida 32604 / noidearecords.com

There’s always at least a couple of bands every year in the “scene” that come around and everyone loses their shit over them and I just sit back and don’t get “it.” Planes...

are this year’s model. Coming off as a direct rip off of all things Hot Water Music, I just don’t understand why the world needs two of that band. This album opens up with a duel vocal growl attack that never lets up for its entirety. Now, some would say this is “intense,” yet it just gets grating and frankly, unoriginal, and somewhere in the middle of song three one realizes the songs tend to blend together into one long mediocre blast. A feeling that usually comes along with me not “getting it” about the popular band of the month is a need to continue to rail about how horrible that band is, so I’ll just stop now.

DESIGN ★★

This has a simple yet effective design. The cover picture is nice and there is a nice minimal usage of skulls in the layout (one on the back and one on the CD itself. One thing I don't understand however, the "joke" metal logos under the CD tray. They seem to go out of their way to seem serious and have a sort of angry atmosphere for the album and then put silly (aka: crotch) drawings under the tray ripping off Corrosion of Conformity of all bands. Ugh. I still don't get it! (AM)

QUIXOTE “PROTESTS OF THE WEAK” ★★★★★

Makoto Recordings: POB 50403 Kalamazoo MI 49005

Coming straight outta Kalamazoo, MI, Quixote are a rockin’ little three piece that are highly inventive and unique. The only band I could compare them to would be Guilt, and even that is a bit of a stretch. Formed in 1997, the band has been working steadily on refining its sound. “The Wolf,” the record’s opening track, is like a boot to the head that knocks your teeth into disarray. The second track, called “Slot Machine,” is a melodic and catchy instrumental, and after listening to this record a few times, I would have to say that it is my favorite. These guys aren’t all about hard rockin’, they have a soft side to them as well. This comes through on tracks like “The Walk” and “Sedona.” These are all about diversity, textures, and melody...they put the love into their music....and the drummer, Mike Gard, is supremely talented. Quixote has shared the stage with the likes of Man or Astro-Man, Karate, Hot Water Music, Kerosene 454, and Braid, just to name a few, so watch for them on the road as they rock with the best of ‘em.

DESIGN ★★★★★

Subtle. Abstract. Minimal. Good mix of colors, looks like fire, sounds like fire. Intense. (JRK)

RADIO BERLIN “THE SELECTION DRONE” CD No Stars

Your Best Guess: yourbestguess.com

Vancouver-based pseudo new wave. This band is part of the new wave revival movement currently going on in the United States. Jerky tempo shifts, Cure-style keyboards, drumming that’s more on the punk end of things, goth singing: new wave revival. Makes me want to put on a Cure or Joy Division record. This is an embarrassing rip off of those bands. Sorry, but I can’t get behind this nuevo-movement at all, and I absolutely hate it that kids know these new bands instead of the ones that are having their songs stolen. If only one of these “new” bands would add something to the genre instead of settling for complete emulation. What is the point of being in a band?

DESIGN ★★

Simple and minimal, but I think they should have just taken a Cure record and pasted their name over the Cure's. You know that record where Propagandhi did that to NOFX? (DL)

RAH BRAS "RUY BLAS" CD ★★★★★

Louitt: POB 248 Arlington VA 22210 / louitt.com

The Rah Bras have gotten nasty and undergone name changes, now credited as Boo Rah, Jean Rah, and Isabellarah Rubella. They've also gone drag and began singing about explicit sex. In the day of so-called new-wave revival (i.e., bands that replicate Duran Duran and Flock of Seagulls with a punk-kids-probably-won't-notice audacity), Rah Bras stand out years ahead of the crowd. All you've got here is bass, drums, and synth, and the three instruments create songs quirkier, more expansive and full than any three piece could be allowed to. All members have played in Men's Recovery Project and their other past bands build a roster that anyone would be proud of. This band travels in a van with a personalized license plate entitled "FUNGRY." "Ruy Blas" showcases the band at their best, surpassing their past releases by miles. They've managed to transform the goofiness of their past records into a cohesive and serious, Kraftwerk-hits-Joy Division-and-makes-out-in-FUNGRY, type of record that is most definitely their own. Highly recommended.

DESIGN ★★★★★

An intensive photo shoot followed the production of this record. Very convincing drag-clad cover shot of the trio, and also more photos of them in drag on the back, and the inside. And once you open up the booklet, there they are again, in drag. Oh yeah, they are wielding swords, sucking on things, and most importantly, looking at you. The packaging is genius, only wish they threw in the lyrics. (DL)

RANDY "YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD BAND DOWN" ★★★

G7 Welcoming Committee: POB 27006 360 Main St. Concourse Winnipeg MbR3c4t3
When it comes to punk bands (I'm talking the "punk" bands) they usually adopt one of two personalities: the silly party joke band, or the political angry band. Randy, is a perfect balance of the two. This Swedish band will follow up a song about how the movie the Exorcist (pt 1 of course) scared the hell out of them when they were young (the rest of the song talks about how #'s 2 and 3 were highly inferior) even though they are atheists, with a serious song about homelessness and neither are done short of perfect. The singing ranges from something that could conceivably be found on Fat or Epitaph to really angry, and then some Elvis Costello-style harmonies and pleasant backups come in from nowhere. The sound culminates into a Dropkick Murphy-style sing along if you substituted the annoying Irish accents with members of Propagandi, the aforementioned Costello, and maybe fellow Swede-rockers the Hives. And although I invoke all of these bands to compare Randy to, they definitely have their own sound and their own agenda as a band. In their own words, they make "music for the working class radio with the intention to make you realize but also to make you forget." As someone who normally can't tolerate sing-along punk rock, Randy came across as a sincere and talented band that I would have no problem listening to or checking out live.

DESIGN ★★★

Nothing special or groundbreaking in the design dept. A six-page booklet with all of the lyrics printed in white letters on black back-ground plus a few color band photos. None of the pictures are anything special—just the requisite band goofing around, band rocking photos. The whole package is competently done. (AM)

RED MONKEY ★★★★★

"GUNPOWDER, TREASON AND PLOT" CD

Troubleman Unlimited: 16 Willow St. Bayonne NJ 07002 / troublemanunlimited.com

Very rarely does a band this solid come along. Blending vocal qualities from the Dog Faced Hermans, funkiness from Fugazi, aesthetic from Submission Hold, and minimalism from Blonde Redhead, Red Monkey manage to capture a unique sound that is truly their own, and is truly great. Vocals alternate between female and male driven sections, catching you with powerful and politically driven lyrics. The stripped down and steady drumming compliments the sparse guitar and bass work. The amazing and memorable guitar sound on this CD tops off the package.

DESIGN ★★★★★

Red Monkey has their own design thing going on. All their records are uniquely theirs. Hand-stamped song titles and more of the same great hand drawn cover art. I wouldn't be surprised if there were no computers used in the assembly of this CD, but you wouldn't notice unless you're looking for it. And that's a good thing. Really, nothing bad to say about this record. Keep up the good work Red Monkey! (DL)

RED SHIRT BRIGADE "HOME OF THE CANNON SAINTS" ★★★★★

Arborvitae Records: POB 577375 Chicago, IL 60657

It's interesting how indie rock has hit such a point that one can put out a seamless indie rock album just by following all the guidelines in the handbook (if I were to be mean and spiteful, I'd say "clichés"). Seamless by meaning that it's SO indie rock by definition you can't ever say "This band will make a good crossover to Dixieland Jazz" or "This band will be the next Deftones." Something about this record shouts my sentiment. There's something seamless about it and I'm not talking about the production. It's a perfect record for the perfect indie rocker. It's light, bouncy, and quite digestible despite subtle experimentation underneath the jangly riffs and the eunich-emulating vocals. I enjoyed the latest offerings of Built to Spill or The Shins, etc., so there's no reason at all I should bypass this (and if you feel the same, then you should do the same. Baa.). The musicianship is more than decent, the songwriting is well-crafted, and it's definitely not boring.

DESIGN—No Stars

If you're going to send something to MediaReader, then you should include the full album artwork, too. Whoever designed this paper sleeve with the sticker on it sucks. Jerks. (VC)

REPLICATOR "WINTERVAL" CD ★★

Self-Released: POB 224 Berkeley CA 94704

Replicator sound like a teenage version of Shellac who even got the bassist from said band, Bob Weston, to record their record. A very good bassist, a decent drummer, and a guitar player who could use more practice, Replicator are a self-described "rhythmic, intense, spastic, and at times angular ROCK band." The Shellac influence comes mostly from their bass player and the production but they have a ways to go before they grow into their own. In a few years these guys could be making some interesting "math rock" but for now they just need to practice a whole lot.

DESIGN ★★

A few stark winter pictures thrown together on the computer and a lay-out is born. Not much to this except for credits and pictures of cats where the band members should be. This just looks self-released but is better than some stuff labels are putting out. The band really likes the fact that Bob Weston recorded their record. (JA)

REVERSE "S/T" CD ★★★

Reverse Operations: 2039 Washington St. Wilmington NC 28401

A review of the earlier Reverse album in a previous MediaReader used the phrase "southern fried brit-pop" to describe them. I would say that is still applicable here but with maybe more of a Police influence who I guess could be considered the godfathers of "brit-pop" maybe? In terms of newer bands, they are playing music along the lines of the band Spoon, perhaps Built to Spill, or even a less cheesy Anniversary (w/o female vocals). They do however sound enough like an original band that this would be worth picking up if you were really into pop music done well. By the fourth and fifth songs I wasn't going to take the album out of the player until it was finished.

DESIGN ★

If I can't find anything bad to say about the band itself then I have to say they should have paid the extra dough to have a competent monkey put together their "digi-pak." The cheap, flimsy packaging began falling apart after I unfolded its parts only a few times. Also the plastic CD tray itself folds out for no reason whatsoever?! And it's this piece that snags on the front cover piece that causes the corner to tear almost immediately. Really poor planning coupled with no lyrics and uninteresting band photos adorning the inside leave much to be criticized. (AM)

SCOTT MOSHER "VIRTUALITY" CD ★★

The Ambient Mind: 1510 Quail Ridge Rd. Suite 1 Raleigh NC 27609

Scott Mosher! What a name! Solo-artist self-proclaimed as "ambient neo-progressive cyber-rock" (it says so ON the CD packaging!). While the '80s prog-rock genre has not particularly flooded enough turn-of-the-century contemporaries to render any clichés, there's not much ground to break despite the technology jump from the 2600 to the X-Box. During the instrumentals, I feel like I'm watching an interlude moment in a really trying television episode of The Highlander. During the tracks with vocals, I feel pretty much the same, but Rush's Geddy Lee is behind me whispering sweet nothings into my ear. Mosher's got an ear for leftist politics, mostly based on environmental issues. While it certainly adds an interesting twist to his delivery, I can't help but think of it as dogmatic rather than educational.

DESIGN ★★ (for humor value)

Scott Mosher! What a name! Also a self-proclaimed graphic artist, Mosher takes the liberty to grace us with Bladerunner-esque graphic paintings depicting the urban decay our world of SUVs, littering, and general disrespect for Mama Earth will lead us to (or so says the essay entitled "Virutality: The Cover Concept... Go behind the ambient mind" in the liner notes). There's a lot of smokestacks to pump one full of phallic imagery, lots of clouds, and lots of space stuff. The center spread has lightning, pyramids, rings, stars, the ocean, and a bunch of other mystical stuff that's something I might get on a fantasy novel. On the inside back cover there's a wolf with a man's body sitting cross-legged on a lake balancing two globes, one on each hand. All the handiwork of Scott Mosher. (VC)

SELDOM "PLACES I HAVEN'T SEEN" CDEP ★★★★★

Casa Recording Co.: 4509 Interlake Ave. N #305 Seattle WA 98103

Seldom, whether reluctantly or not, will be running under the banner that says "ex-Pedro the Lion." It's quiet and sparse indie rock that sounds like a less ambient Mogwai mixed with that lo-fi Pinback feel. Throw in a heavy dosage of some of the quieter, softer Pacific Northwest indie rock coming out these days. It's the kind of music you would see live, rip a loud-but-not-so-stank

fart, and the catastrophe would warrant being shunned from the scene. For a first release, Seldom is pretty damn sophisticated. You'd think that songwriter Yuuki Matthews would be a seasoned veteran, which shows a lot of promise for any release after this EP.

DESIGN ★★

For an EP, a great deal of money was pumped into this debut release. Well, at least in terms of printing. We have a heavy durable stock with a gloss so thick you can 1) smell it, 2) leave your oily fingerprints all over it, and 3) see your oily zit marked face in the reflection. The photography depicts slow shutter images of moving lights, perfectly highlighting the 'Places I Haven't Seen' title. While this scores points in being durable enough to survive decades of use in a CD wallet, it's a little much for a debut release. Ask me again in ten years if this release forges its way into the realm of timeless recordings. (VC)

SEVEN STOREY "DIVIDING BY ZERO" CD ★★★

Deep Elm: POB 36939 Charlotte NC 28236 / deepelm.com

Formerly known as Seven Storey Mountain, these guys are back with a new abbreviated name, a new label, and a new LP. This isn't the type of stuff that Deep Elm would have been releasing a few years ago, but they've been constantly and pleasantly surprising me lately. Seven Storey play driving, DC-ish rock. Driven by guitar and powerful vocals, these guys would fit well on a bill with Burning Airlines or Shiner. Melodic but angular at the same time. The instruments separate well, making a pleasing mix. The promo sheet says they are a cross between DC and NC, which I would probably agree with. DC for the rock and NC for the repetitive yet intricate guitar work. This is good rock, not mind-blowing, but solid work.

DESIGN ★

SS has a nice logo. That's the main thing that's notable about this package. The photos are black and white, but the logo is safety orange, and it repeats on the cover, the tray card, and the CD. Beyond this, the package looks a bit thrown together. Not very good or interesting photos, and I don't see them fitting into a "concept" of the record. (DL)

SHINER "THE EGG" ★★★★★

DeSto: POB 60932 WDC 20039

Shiner plays a sound that is reminiscent heavily of Jawbox and Hum, while teetering on the periphery between indie rock and commercial alternative rock. With the polished vocals and more unconventional guitar parts, I am surprised that they have not been signed to a major label. It's well executed but more aesthetically oriented; no attention is given in the packaging to the lyrical content.

DESIGN: ANDY MUELLER ★★★★★

The artwork is very minimally conveyed with the limited colors of orange, black and white. The CD construction is a nice fold out three-panel cardboard case that gives it more of a feel of an LP. The imagery is very minimalist and repetitive. The cover is divided horizontally in half. The lower half is flat cadmium orange with a white egg in the bottom center. The upper half has high contrasted images of the band members behind overlaid orange text from the liner notes. Above this is the band's name in typeface. I must say that although this type of art doesn't excite me, it is well done from a graphic design standpoint. (GL)

SLIM CESSNA'S AUTO CLUB "S/T" CD ★★★★★

Alternative Tentacles: POB 419092 SF CA 94141

SCAC play old folk country/traditional tunes with almost perfect vocals. This is very ordinary yet very strange stuff. Á la Hazel Adkins or even Nick Cave, this crew could spawn

the next cult folk/country movement. It's creepy and lo-fi but very tasteful and somehow very high-fi and smooth at the same time. There are three traditional tunes on this disc and the remaining eleven are originals. You've got a ton of instruments going at any given time, everything from fiddle to pedal guitar to keyboards. The recording quality is minimal but fits perfectly so it feels "right" instead of overproduced. This is the best release that I've heard from Alternative Tentacles in a very long time. I'm kicking myself for not going to see this band when they played Chicago recently. Highly recommended!

DESIGN: JASON ROSENBERG ★★★

I like the feel of this. Cut and paste/silkscreen aesthetic, but it's offset printed. B/W with a block color of red, the way you used to be able to make copies at Kinko's before they replaced all their copiers. Simple, cool and quirky enough to fit. (DL)

SLOWRIDE "AS I SURVIVE THE SUICIDE BOMBER" CD ✶

Deep Elm: POB 36939 Charlotte NC 28236 / deepelm.com

Well, the one sheet says "Not since Jawbreaker has any band so successfully combined heart-breaking melody and white noise." I completely disagree. This CD is pop punk of the worst variety, and, furthermore, it occasionally pushes the limits of Blink 182. Songs about being a boy with a desperate heart, being crushed by girls, and then being left alone in the night, a victim of hard love. Believe me, I've felt that way before. There is a certain commonality of human emotion, but we don't need to start bands about it. And, if you do, at least come at it from the pre-I've-completely-lost-my-mind-and-pour-OJ-on-the-kitchen-counter Ozzy-esque standpoint, or maybe even from the post-disco Madonna angle. I've heard this record too many times, and this is most definitely not Jawbreaker. The sheer comparison is a cheap shot at giving something that is bad validity in a one sheet.

DESIGN ★★★

I like the drawing on the cover. The rest of it has a real teen feel to it that I can't describe so well. Looks like cut and pasted doodles that came out of someone's Algebra notebook. (DL)

SNUFF "BLUE GRAY: PHASE 9" CD ★★★

Fat Wreck Chords: POB 193690, SF, CA 94119

Yep, good old British ska-punk. This is the stuff that started it all back in the '70s. Oh, wait. Blue Gray: Phase 9 came out in 2001. I guess it's still innovative 30 years later?

DESIGN ★✶

It literally took me about three weeks to figure out whether Snuff was the name of the album or the band. Then, once I had that nailed down it took me another three weeks to make sense of the title Blue Gray: Phase 9, the words "Blue Gray" being stenciled in a blue box directly below the word Snuff and the phrase "Phase 9" being stenciled onto a blue bowling bag on a white background. Other than being very confusing the layout is also very dry and disjointed. (WE)

SON, AMBULANCE "EUPHEMYSTIC" CD ★★★

Saddle Creek: POB 8554 Omaha NB 68108 / saddle-creek.com

This record shows Son, Ambulance improving 1000% above his last release—the split with Bright Eyes. The music features more complex chord progressions and the vocals are more stimulating but also much more influenced by Connor Oberst. With the popularity of Bright Eyes, I feared that it wouldn't be long until every

kid with an acoustic guitar and feelings would be trying to hash out public versions of their life, lacking the inherent insightfulness and uniqueness of the original. Well Son, Ambulance haven't done quite that, sounding more like a quirky "Piano Man" or Jason Faulkner than an acoustic singer/songwriter, but they do take cues from fellow label mates. I'm impressed by this release.

DESIGN ★★

Dark earth tones with multi-toned drawings. Nothing too memorable. Illegible handwritten lyrics inside the booklet. Quaint, inoffensive, "personal." (DL)

SORRY ABOUT DRESDEN ★★★

"THE CONVENIENCE OF INDECISION" CD

Saddle Creek: POB 8554 Omaha NB 68108 / saddle-creek.com

This is not the SAD that I remember from seeing them play countless times a few years ago—they got that Omaha disease! Nonetheless, the songwriting on this record has improved ten-fold over their previous efforts, but what happened to the vocals? Well, they took a turn towards Archers of Loaf, Cursive, Crooked Fingers, and Bright Eyes. With the band's ties to Omaha (one of the guys in SAD is Connor Oberst's brother) and their current locale in Chapel Hill, the swing actually makes quite a bit of sense. If you're a native North Carolinian who's heard them before but not seen them in a while, I recommend checking out what you've got in your backyard; if you're a newcomer, you may just find Sorry About Dresden to be the best band with the worst name that you've heard in a very long time. This is a solid record and fans of any of the mentioned bands should take note of this release.

DESIGN ★✶

This is, unfortunately, one of those packages where the music is much better than the design. Not very memorable b/w photos that are too over-saturated (cover), too abstract (back), or not very interesting (inside). The font is nice and I dig the simplicity of the CD face, but more importantly I want the lyrics in here so that I can sing along. (DL)

SPITALFIELD "FASTER CRASHES HARDER" CD ★★★

Walk In Cold Records: 8408 Lakeside Dr. Downers Grove IL 60516

Straight out of DuPage County Illinois, comes a promising emocore (sheesh already) band. No, it's not super-original material but you can tell these guys have a lot of energy and it's captured well on "Faster Crashes Harder." Although at times the production does sound a bit too thin. They probably play all the decent suburban parties. Their faster, harder songs are the ones that are worth listening to. When Spitalfield slows it down to show off more of their sensitive side, it gets a little too slow and yawn-inducing. There are enough signs here that if they keep at it, their next record will be a stronger record, showing off less of their influences and more originality.

DESIGN: Eric Snyder ★★★

Pictures of old war planes in flight and their pilots...not bad. I haven't seen much of the airplane theme used these days. (DN)

STROBE TALBOT "20 SONGS" CD ✶

Alternative Tentacles: POB 419092 SF CA 94141

Jad Fair, Mick Hobbs, and Benb Callaher come together to release twenty short and lo-fi pop songs. Jad Fair assaults the listener with his love it or hate it, sarcas-

tically and obnoxiously delivered stream-of-goofiness vocals. The songs aren't well written and they aren't driving enough to dance to. To top it off, the playing is hellishly sloppy on this recording, making me wonder if their time could have been better spent somewhere other than a studio.

DESIGN: JAD FAIR, JASON ROSENBERG ✶

Some pixelated reproductions of robots with Helvetica set type. The pictures are bad, the type is bad. The whole package is, really, just dumbfoundingly bad. (DL)

SUPERSLEUTH "THIRTY-ONE MONTHS" ★★★

Failed Experiment: POB 6625 Naperville IL 60567

I didn't know people still wore straight edge branded clothing anymore! That kind of makes me happy. This suburban Illinois band play good old early HC the way the sXe kids used to translate it. Since all the metal has taken over hardcore, these types of bands have disappeared and all the nostalgia has gone towards rehasing skate thrash. Supersleuth take an influence from Uniform Choice and not-as-pissed-off Youth of Today. A lot of the singer's hooks nod towards a So-Cal skate punk style. They pull all the old clichés, even down to the slightly cheesy lyrics! So instead of throwing your money at some huge "independent" label for a H2O record, you can pick this one up instead.

DESIGN ★

A design that's generally typical of bands just starting out (or who never really dealt with an album layout before). It all comes from the "We just recorded an album and now they want album artwork to go along with it. [long pause] Wait. We don't know anything about it!" A digital mass of live photos poorly Photoshopped together. Goudy typefaces. Terrible alignment. It's not offensive, but not at all appealing. (GL)

TEENAGE FANCLUB & JAD FAIR ★★★

"WORDS OF WISDOM AND HOPE" CD

Alternative Tentacles: POB 419092 SF CA 94141

As opposed to the review somewhere else in this issue for Strobe Talbot (another release featuring Jad Fair on vocals), the music on this CD is damn good, well-written, and tight. A slew of mellow songs that can't avoid comparison to the Nico-era Velvet Underground. Jad Fair assumes the role as a crack head Lou Reed, bantering spoken "poetry" atop the beautiful music. Lyrical highlights include "Cupid is a righteous dude" and "...then I'll buy you some cotton candy, wouldn't that be dandy?" and, finally, a Dylan-esque push rhyme: "from the top down to the bottom, I dig everything that you gottem." Where Lou Reed was exceptional at playing off human emotion and really communicating with the listener, Jad Fair continuously misses the connection, stumbling back into his onslaught of bad drunken poetry. In contrast, the music is great. I would like to hear this CD before Jad Fair overdubbed his mind-boggling parts.

DESIGN: JAD FAIR, JASON ROSENBERG ★

I can't get into Jad Fair's aesthetic at all. Three illustrations that look like they were made in MacPaint. Helvetica font that is way too large and placed as if the designer wasn't paying attention. (DL)

THIS BEAUTIFUL MESS "FALLING ON DEAF EARS" ★★★

Deep Elm: POB 36939 Charlotte NC 28236 / deepelm.com

This Beautiful Mess are Holland's answer to Radiohead in that they try to sound just like them. They are also another European import from an American independent label that wants to put out a cheap record to meet some distribution

quota. The songs on "Falling on Deaf Ears" sound like Radiohead's early more rocking, edgier songs like "Creep" or even "Paranoid Android." This isn't to say these songs are bad, they are actually quite good, they just sound a lot like Radiohead. According to the press sheet, the theme of this album is the "primal longing to understand the spirit that guides us, the soundtrack to our lives, the mysterious force that gets us through it all." While sounding a bit pretentious, that about sums up the album. They are not whiny emo like you would expect from Deep Elm, just a good rock band that really likes Radiohead. So if you like Radiohead's more rocking songs, you might want to try picking up "Falling on Deaf Ears."

DESIGN ★★

A simple, cheap two page layout with a picture of a leafless forest with colorful butterflies superimposed over it. There are no lyrics inside, which is really disappointing, but a really blown-out faded blue-gray picture of the band rocking out which is even more disappointing because it's just a waste of paper. Just another boring, cheap layout that took five minutes to put together. (JA)

THOUGHTS OF IONESCO ★★★

"FOR DETROIT, FROM ADDICTION" CD

Atarms Mechanics

This package is the funniest thing. Seems like the fourth retrospective that rolled in. The last two years have seen punk rock turn into memoirs and retrospectives. Books, CDs, websites. Is it over? Most of these releases are filled with gut-wrenchingly honest accounts about how it was, or what the people were thinking, who they made friends with, who they made out with. Ionesco went a different route and compiled snippets of conversation about their band, displaying them in the booklet. What is being said about them is not good stuff, but it functions to create the mystique that all members of this bands were drug popping, thieving, masochistic assholes. Not that any of those qualities default you to "asshole," but these quotes definitely lead to that. I mean, there is nothing good here. A band about destruction on all levels, perpetually discontent with playing shows and their audiences. It's funny, damn funny. I want to see this band now, but they broke up two years ago. The music? Violent, abrasive hardcore. Not blast beats, more like a more pissed off UOA. This is apparently their most "honest" record. Man...

DESIGN: AARON O ★

Simple, minimalist. Way too minimalist for me. I want it to convey the anger, the masochism, the pain and the alienation that this band felt. It doesn't seem like abstract photos and Helvetica work so well here. Give me something fucked up! (DL)

THUMB "3" CD ★

Victory: POB 416546 Chicago IL 60614 / victoryrecords.com

Alterna-rock, MTV 2, rap metal from Germany. Thick and mean, screamed vocals. Vaguely socio-political, but masked and abstract enough for a bunch of meatheads to power-bounce to at a show without actually having to think about what they are power-bouncing to.

DESIGN ★

Cover image is a Thumb decal on a car door. Nothing memorable here at all. Some pictures of their gear and of them in the studio. (DL)

TIJUANA CRIME SCENE "CHANGE OF VENUE" No Stars

Arise Records: POB 45 Shelbyville KY 40066

There is that one Eighties movie that I can't remember the name of with Tom Cruise (before he was mega-star Cruise of course) and Shelly Long (before she was mega-

star...oh wait, never mind!) about the hilarious hi-jinx of four young men traveling to Tijuana for spring break. And as teenage middle class boys in the eighties often dreamt of (I guess) they proceed to wreak havoc with their parent's money and car etc... in the lawless land of the American-tourist-dollar crippled Tijuana! Now, I bring this up because the band Tijuana Crime Scene seems to share a lot in common with this theme, which goes far beyond the name coincidence. It seems as though more than a few young middle class Caucasian males have taken mommy and daddy's money and run amuck in the studios! Just to bring us this album of trite cliché indie-pop drivel. Members of the Get Up Kids, The Anniversary, Reflector, and some other Midwest pop "superstars" banded together to play one Alex Brahl's master compositions. I believe this band has played out maybe two times, so I really don't see the point of this band, other than to showcase the "talents" (and the wasted money, of course) of all involved. The music is just a pathetic rehash of Reggie and the Full Effect, The Anniversary, Koufax, etc... and much like the plots of most Eighties movies, I just don't see the point except for maybe a few cheap laughs.

DESIGN ★

They get one star for the effort it might have taken to cut a perfect rectangle for the colors of the Mexican flag to show through from the back page to the cover. (AM)

TODD LARRY LLOYD "YOUR DUMB IDEA" ★★★

Unity vs. Apathy: 418 Mason St. Morrisville NY 12962

This band should really try being an instrumental band. They combine Sonic Youth noodleings with some (dare I say) Big Black-esque guitar and bass lines that are really interesting and attention grabbing. Sometimes the music gets a little hokey, but not nearly as asinine as the lyrics, which is why they should not sing at all! In every song with singing the vocals are usually masked behind some strange effect anyway, so if these three fellas are so ashamed of their vocals they could really do without them, as the instrumentation is captivating enough. The press sheet said that two of the trio just finished an updated soundtrack to the famous silent film Metropolis, now that is something I would like to hear from the members of this band.

DESIGN ★

Usually printing the lyrics earns some points, but honestly, they're really bad...so I guess what's left is a simple black and white design with the booklet opening up on two blank pages, which I never understand the intent of. I'm surprised at the lack of ingenuity on the part of the band because (what with writing film soundtracks and all) they seem like pretty creative folks. (AM)

TWELVE HOUR TURN "BEND BREAK SPILL" CD ★★★★

No Idea: POB 14636 Gainesville FL 32604 / noidearecords.com

Returning with a four song EP, Twelve Hour Turn continue their signature DC-goes-to-Florida-style hardcore. A handful more of solid DCish emo-inflected songs. Angular, introspective and dissonant at times, anthemic and bold at others, the Turn are onto something. But they have been for quite some time, as you probably know. You have their records, right? You should.

DESIGN: SEAN MAHAN ★★★

12 Hour Turn have their own design thing. HWM are probably the most notable FL rock ensemble to have stuck with the same artist for all their albums. The Turn have the same type of thing going on. Nice

paintings and hand stamped lettering, but I wish the cover was a bit bolder. The lyrics are handwritten in cursive and practically illegible. That's too bad. Nice artwork though. (DL)

THE UNDECIDED "MORE TO SEE" ★

Tooth and Nail: POB 12698 Seattle WA 98111

More Sunday school bland punk rock from Tooth and Nail. Another band in an endless stream from this label who sound exactly the same with similar sounding names. Occasionally this label will put out a good CD, but they mostly stick with their own versions of uninteresting punk bands that their pastor doesn't mind them listening to. These bands put out a record a year because they don't tour—yet they don't evolve as a band or try to change their sound, they just release the same damn record every year. I don't care that it's religious, I do care that the band doesn't seem to care about what they are putting out. They just play it safe and hope a few kids buy it. Boring, uninspiring, unoriginal, bland punk rock.

DESIGN ▼

A terrible layout where you can actually see the jagged edges where they cut the bands pictures out and pasted them over a white background. The whole four page folded layout plays it safe by just featuring the band members and their bible lyrics, therefore not offending anyone. It had to have only taken three minutes to put this thing together. They even have a statement about North America's shitty capitalistic economic system then go on to list the companies they endorse or their "hook-ups." Unbelievable. (JA)

THE UNKNOWN "POP ART" ★★★

Boss Tunesage: POB 19550 London SW11 1FG U.K.

Listening to this CD takes me back to 10th grade when I went through weeks when I listened to nothing but Down By Law, Descendents and Dag Nasty. This CD is comprised of that high energy, medium tempo pop-punk that has become so overwrought and excessively preyed upon by MTV. The band combines a Stephen Egerton and Brian Baker approach to guitar playing, yet falls short for any one aspect of the CD to come forward as distinctive or unique. I get into it for a few songs and then realize that I am singing along to songs expressing the stereotypical sentimentality that accompanies this genre or bitterly denouncing the most likely audience of their music. The song "Blink" expresses such lacking lyrical productivity: "And you at 15 you are an expert on what is cool...You can't learn about the 'underground' from MTV News. I don't think you'll ever understand." Whether these bands that all sound unrecognizable after awhile challenge anything other than already typical overchallenged norm I don't care to know, but they still crowd the "underground" and MTV.

DESIGN: KEN AND WAYNE (OF THE UNKNOWN) ★★

The cover and inside artwork is a very crude imitation of Andy Warhol's screen prints of celebrities. The cover is divided into quadrants in which each contains a portrait of a band member. Three band members have typical emo-looking girl-grabbing expressions, while the fourth has this goofy bug-eyed expression on his gangrene green face, which is offset nicely by the flat orange background. I find this juxtaposition utterly hilarious, even if the whole cover appears to have been done in Photoshop by a novice in less than an hour and the type/size of the band name and album title is hard to distinguish. This goofy humor is extended in the liner centerfold which has a 4 by 8 grid of portraits in same aforementioned style, including bandmembers, assumed friends, and inserted randomly: a candid portrait of a cat and penguin. For a lightheartedly laugh, they knowingly or unknowingly poke fun at a pop icon's art. I like that. (GL)

UTAH! "ZOO SOUNDS AND DESTRUCTOVISION" CD ★★★

Arborvitae: POB 857 Champaign IL 61824

Fans of the musical *Oklahoma!* will want to check out this heart-warming tale of polygamous Mormons struggling to live it up in a world too square for their...oh, just kidding. Actually this is moody indie rock, maybe comparable to Pinback, with cello. Song five is the winner on this disc. Utah! reminds me a lot of a band I liked in college, the Dambuilders, who were kind of indie also-rans from the mid-nineties and did a similar thing, especially with the cello. The Dambuilders had an energy which this band lacks, at least on record. I could see this being good live, though.

DESIGN ★

Brown with a strip of blue underneath. I like the blue, I don't like the brown. Muted earth tones are out, garish florescent colors are in—come on guys, get with the program. (AB)

VIZA-NOIRE "S/T" CD ★

Flameshovel: 2322 W. Walton Ave. Chicago IL 60622 / flameshovel.com

Nation of Ulysses was a great band—truly a great band. Crass was a great band as well, but the scene they spawned is truly disgusting. T-shirts as a definition of political affiliation and the same trite catch lingo. Have you ever been to a crust festival? I have! I've seen the Wal-Mart stores that socio-crustian anarchists present to the masses, laden with the same T-shirts and record covers, redone and redone and redone—2001 renditions of what was actually revolutionary in the 1980s. It's sick really, as if these bands are missing the entire point of what the bands they are imitating were actually attempting to convey. The ideas of adaptation and evolution are thrown immediately out the window for the convenience of duplication. Viza-Noire aren't quite the same version of NOU knockoff— but the five out of six songs of this CD would lead you to think so. This is Chicago's version of NOU. A little more art, a little more rock. Jesus, at least it's upbeat...

DESIGN ★★

So there's a dilemma here. I do love art that has been touched by humans. And this, my friend, is a human-based silk-screened cover. One of the problems is that what is screened on this cover is not interesting. Pseudo-constructivist? Shapes in different shades of blue and gray. Don't get me wrong, I love the idea, but if you'd going to spend all that time on screening a cover, at least make it stand out in the crowd. The potential is definitely there! The other problem with silk-screened covers is that they tend to be an odd shape and fall apart easily. Simply no way around this. So yes, this could be one beautiful CD case, but is it, and above that, is it functional? Only time will tell. (DL)

VOLTA DO MAR "AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT (OR DAY)" ★★★★★

Arborvitae: POB 857 Champaign IL 61824

One of the most revealing hints about Volta Do Mar's Sound (their name derives from the Portuguese phrase "Turn of the Sea") is the location of their record label: Champaign, Illinois. This general area calls to mind bands such as the now almost legendary Braid and Cap'n Jazz that share a similar distinctive Midwest sound. Volta Do Mar is an offspring of these aesthetics, although one must be able to imagine a predominantly instrumental at times spacey Cap'n Jazz with 50% more reverby instrumentals bordering on a math rock formula and 80% less vocals. What you are left with is a stripped down

instrumental CD that serves well as emotive ambient background music. I'm really digging it. Also thrown in to diversify their sound a bit is anything from pleasing violin accompaniments to abrupt changes in style from heavier metal parts that call to mind the Fucking Champs to soft subtle leads that come across as reverby speed metal guitar solos. Somehow these fragmented parts are all unified through their math rock structure.

DESIGN

Unfortunately only an Arborvitae business card and press sheet was supplied with this CD. I'd be interested in seeing how their packaging relates to the music. One funny section of the press sheet is called "Name Drops" which is exactly what it sounds like: an opportunity for the label to establish credibility by listing bands who have played with Volta Do Mar. I find it pretty funny. I'd rather have the CD cover in front of me. (GL)

THE WHITE OCTAVE "MENERGY" CD ★★

Initial: POB 17131 Louisville KY 40217 / initialrecords.com

This band comes across as a direct cross between Shellac and Cursive. Driving metallically-toned bass and pounding drumming. The guitars are more on the Marshall end of the spectrum than Shellac's ultra high end bite. Breakdowns and guitar harmonies. Now Bob Weston produced this album, and the singer is from Omaha where he actually did time as a fill-in guitarist for Cursive, so the combination makes some sense. They've got this throbbing rhythm section with that Omaha vocal inflection (trick or style?), catchy lyrics, and a turn-it-to-ten mentality. This band, once out of Chapel Hill, is now defunct. It's really too bad, as people into Cursive would find a ton of love for these guys, and the genre seems to be getting popular right now. As the title would lead you to believe, this is most definitely male-driven rock, and in the same tradition as HWM and Cursive, this exposes the male's emotional side while still harvesting the anger and loud violence that so many kids just have to see.

DESIGN: CASEY BURNS ★★★★★

Cover art of nude man. Title is hilarious and fits like a glove—a perfect cover. No lyrics and I'm not into the super-expanded font that's used. If not for the font, it would be a five star job. To reiterate, the cover is absolutely brilliant and worth the trip to a record store to gaze upon. (DL)

WINEPRESS "COMPLETE RECORDINGS" ★

Harmless: 1218 W. Hood Ave, Apt #2 Chicago IL 60660

Winepress has not been a band for close to 7 years now, and when they were a band, they were only together for about 1 year. This record contains all the material the band ever recorded, which was mostly available before in 7" vinyl. Winepress was a little punk rock outfit from Chicago...I say little because when the band formed the guitarist RJ DeYoung was only 13. The music has a very high school kid practice in the garage sound to it, like something you listened to in school on your record player that you bought right from the band at some dirt-hole show. I am not really sure why Harmless felt compelled to release this, simply because I feel the whole Minor Threat punk thing was played out years ago. Not that many people were into that back then, so why would they be into it now?

DESIGN ★

The cover and artwork are just old snapshots of the band playing live....pretty boring. On the inside you can read the short history of the band and images of the 7"s they put out. (JRK)

ZERO ZERO "AM GOLD" ★★★★★

Jadetree: 2310 Kennwynn Rd. Wilmington DE 19810 / jadetree.com

Zero Zero is composed of Ari and Dave from Lifetime (singer and guitarist, respectively) and Ari's wife, "Miss TK." Originally, the band had more members and a more consistent sound, but according to the press sheet, they decided to break down the sound and rebuild Zero Zero. The result is a more experimental electronica rock-based Bell and Sebastian. The album however reads more like a collection of audio experiments and thumbnails than an album with a consistent sound. Perhaps, through their experimentation a style has been reached, but not in the way Radiohead's "Kid A" was presented. In "Kid A" Thom York's voice is threaded through the album in order to unify the diversity of the experimental ranges of sound. In "AM Gold," however, Ari doesn't take advantage of his voice as much as Tom York does. Some of the longer instrumental parts and songs read more as filler than necessary for the album to be solid. If taken for more of a preliminary for a future sound, I am looking forward to hearing where they take their experimentation.

DESIGN: ED BROGNA/ JES2D ★★★★★

The art matches the music well: a sixties-era pastel palette of pseudo-psychedelic hand lettered phrases such as "Hello, how are you?" and "Listen Listen" nestled between the AM Gold/ Zero Zero title lettering and a stack of gold nuggets labeled with more of the same. A stack of gold nuggets occupies the majority of the back of the album cover as well. (GL)

V/A "THE BRYCC HOUSE BENEFIT" CD ★★★★★

The Brycc House: 1055 Bardstown Road Louisville KY 40204

The Bardonia Road Youth Cultural Center (Brycc, pronounced "Brick") is apparently that region's only youth-run youth center. Hosting a multitude of events such as poetry readings, theatre and music performances and art exhibitions as well as housing a radio station, public computer lab, independent book library, the Brycc house is an amazing institution all built out of grassroots organizing. This benefit CD contains an eclectic 25 tracks that make up an excellent compilation. Ranging from the destruction of Bodyhammer to the way-too-long Chumbawamba's "Enough is Enough (kick it over)," to the punk of De LaHoya and Harum Scarum, you've got a lot of variety. Also appearing on the disc is Kung Fu Rick, Ill Eagle and Truce. The final track on the album is an excerpt from Noam Chomsky's "Power of the People." The theme of the disc directly reflects the principle of the Brycc house. It's all DIY and true democracy. Definitely admirable. For more information on the Brycc house, go to their website at brycchouse.org.

DESIGN ★★

A picture of what I'm guessing is the Brycc house. (DN)

V/A THE EMO DIARIES ★★★★★

“CHAPTER SIX – THE SILENCE IN MY HEART” CD

Deep Elm: POB 36939 Charlotte, NC 28236 / www.deepelm.com

This being the first Emo Diary compilation that I've heard, I was really sort of dreading the thought of pushing play after putting the CD into my computer. But damn, it's good stuff. One thing I was really impressed with was the fact that these twelve bands originate from all

over the globe, from Tokyo, to Sweden, to Baltimore. I had always thought emo was a uniquely American, mainly Mid-western phenomenon, but I suppose all across the world there are sincere, sensitive boys whose ex-girlfriends have broken their fragile hearts. Deep Elm has done a great job selecting the best of a stereotyped genre to make jaded hardcore kids like me eat their derivative words towards emo. The CD holds especially strong tracks from Sweden's Stuart, and Oregon's The Desert City Soundtrack. This compilation does an excellent job of showing the scope of emo; from poppy and up-beat with an almost punky energy to sparse and crushing piano work. Anyone who freely associates themselves with emo (i.e., emo-kids, emophaggarios such as myself, etc.), probably already know about this incredible series of compilations, and anyone who is wary of the dreaded "e" should check out this CD to see that crying about your ex-girlfriend doesn't disqualify your band from kicking ass.

DESIGN ★★

I can't tell if Deep Elm has a good sense of humor about that whole "emo" thing, or if they are actually fiercely embracing the stereotypes associated with the genre. Regardless, I always get a kick out of the Emo Diaries cover art. All the covers feature some icon from the collective childhood of sweater wearing boys across the world. This particular edition is colored in grays and blues, features a distantly nostalgic roller skate, and of course all the text is written in cursive. On the back of the booklet there is a nice black and white photograph of a boy's feet and some puddles. Despite amusing me greatly the actual design is too thick and awkward to work well. (WE)

V/A TROUBLEMAN MIX-TAPE 2XCD ★★★★★

Troubleman Unlimited: 16 Willow St. Bayonne NJ 07002 / troublemanunlimited.com

This is the best compilation I've seen in a very long time. You have virtually every good underground band that is in existence today (and a few of yesterday) on this thing, with very few weak links. Everyone from Unwound to the Need, Red Monkey to Lightning Bolt, The Fucking Champs to The Locust, Outhud to Melt-Banana. Not only this, every song is exclusive to this double CD set. The bands speak for themselves, this is a solid compilation that is more than worthy of getting. The last comp I said that about was the Ground Rule Double comp that came out over five years ago.

DESIGN: M. SIMONETTI, MARK OWENS, A. HENRY ★★★★★

It's great. A bunch of old TDK low bias cassettes flying across the Rocky Mountains with "TMU 50" substituted for the "TDK 60". Cut and paste aesthetic but, given the lineup here, I'm sure it was assembled in a much more high-tech fashion. Fucking great. (DL)

V/A FIGHT TO WIN "A BENEFIT FOR OCAP" ★★★★★

G7 Welcoming Committee: POB 27006 360 Main St. Concourse Winnipeg MbR3c4t3

This is an unusual release. What I expected to be a spoken word release is nothing of the sort. Composed of members from Godspeed You Black Emperor!, Exhaust, and Norman Nawrocki, Bakunin's Bum provides the music on this disc. What you get is about 60 minutes of tasteful and jammy soundscape music with interspersed lectures from Shawn Brant and Sue Collins. The lectures drop in to offer informative, engaging, optimistic and inspiring messages concerning poverty. This CD is a benefit for OCAP: the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty. G-7 has managed to orchestrate a spoken word type of CD in a

format that is actually listenable, which is a tremendous feat in regards to the format. I will keep listening to this over and over. The music is beautiful and each time you hear this thing, you pick up more of the words and ideas. This is a tremendous accomplishment in the forward motion of spoken word!

DESIGN ★★★

This thing doesn't look so hot, but it's filled with information on poverty and OCAP—a necessary compliment for this record. Lots of writing rounds out a very good G-7 release. (DL)

